

pentagram

Lectorium Rosicrucianum



Dialogue – *A conversation about
creation, man and the language
of the soul*

*It is in dialogue that we live,
everything speaks in us*

*A conversation about creation
Of man - The dialogue within
ourselves*

**Deep silence, thought,
consciousness, word**

**The Italian dialogues of
Giordano Bruno**

Edda – The fate of the gods

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pentagram

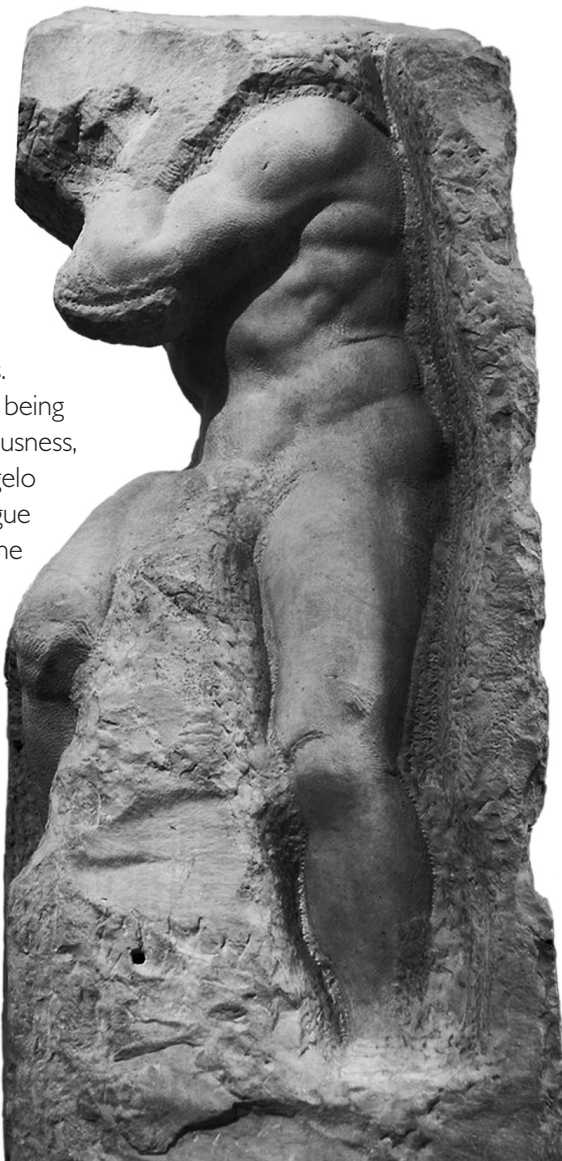
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The Taittiriya Upanishad, written many thousands of years ago, perfectly describes the theme of this issue of the Pentagram.

'For making knowledge rise up, both a teacher as well as a pupil are needed. And in addition, a third factor: a dialogue or conversation.'

The mighty primordial image of man, sown in matter, is awakened in this dialogue and shows, during an age-long development, ever more of his beautiful outlines.

The true human being is wholly consciousness, gnosis. Michelangelo showed, in dialogue with the stone, the genesis of this human being.



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Cover: In this fresco from the palace of king Minos in Knossos (Crete), 'La Parisienne' strikingly represents the atmosphere and mental attitude of this special issue of the Pentagram: dialogue.

dialogue

The topic of this special issue is Dialogue – a conversation about creation, man and the language of the soul. He who feels to a certain extent attracted by these words, which are core concepts, will probably understand that the dialogue that we seek is different from an exchange of points of view.

Imagine a common space that we entered by opening this magazine. It is our space.

We will wholly fill it with our time, our thinking power, our longing for knowledge and insight, and perhaps by our yearning for redemption or liberation. In this space, everything is present and possible. It scintillates, teeming with energy that can become concretely active like the feeling of a child on the eve before its tenth birthday. However, nothing is concrete yet.

A conversation would dull this space and make it expressionless. A debate would turn this space into an arena. A dialogue does the very opposite: it makes this space 'fertile' as it were – every participant leaves it richer, gains more insight and feels 'connected'. A dialogue always develops at a certain level – and what is more: it makes what is present in this space free, visible, tangible and concrete. The Greek word *dialogos* means: 'through' the 'word', what becomes possible through the word – in this case the written word!

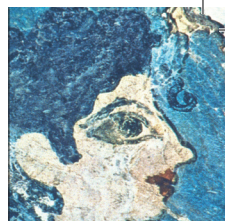
Rational arguments count in dialogues that usually follow the trace of arguments that matter most at that moment. Nevertheless, most dialogues are not aimless or endless because there is no channel for the stream of arguments. Even in so-called 'open dialogues', this is not the case.

In Plato's classical dialogues, we see how Socrates was able to give direction to the dialogue by asking questions, not as an interrogator, but by respectfully asking the discussion

partner questions on the basis of the latter's truth, which was often embedded in a fixed or self-evident opinion.

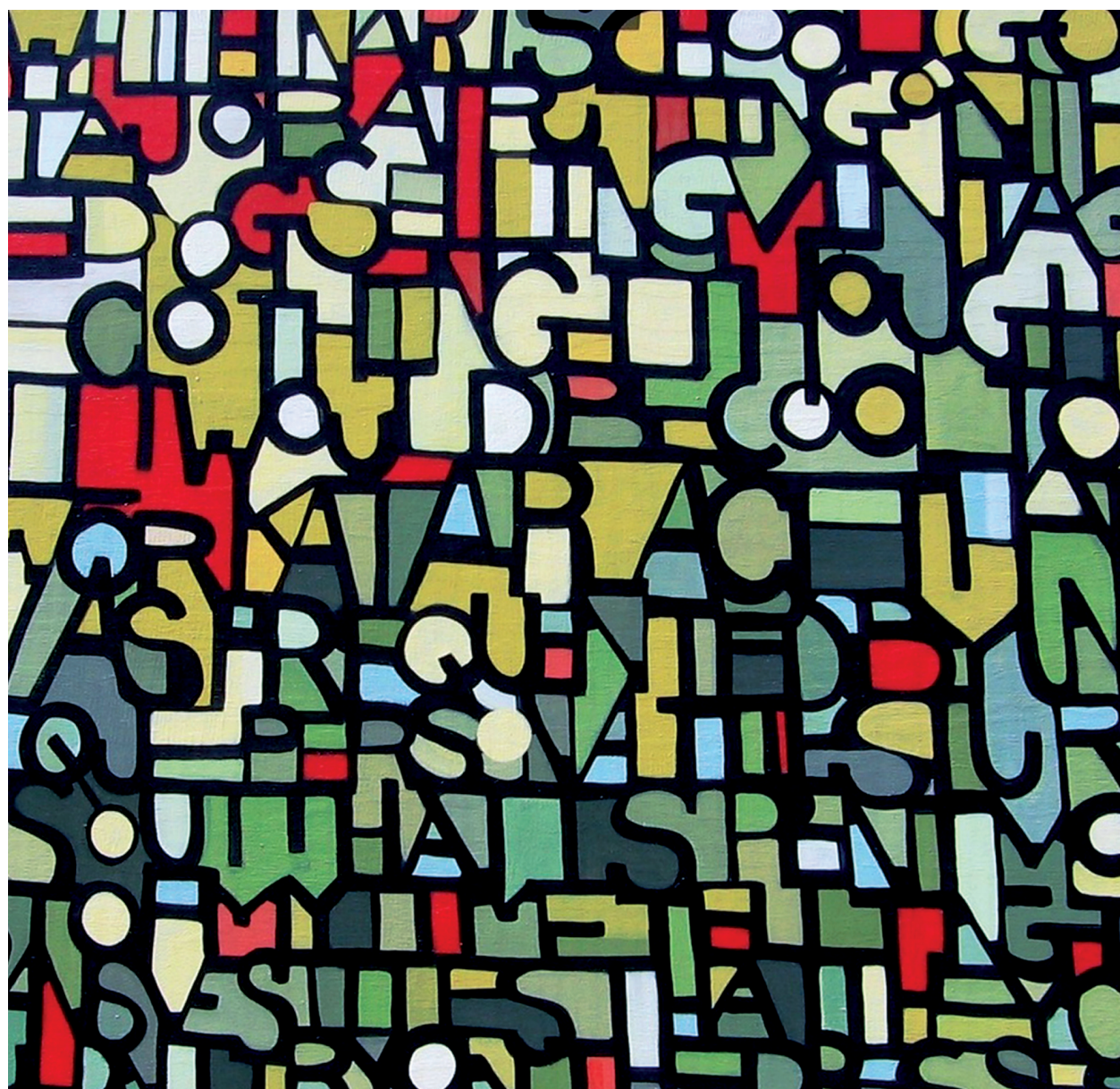
It was Socrates' inner wealth of wisdom and knowledge that enabled him to ask his questions in such a way that they gave direction to the conversation. He was quite aware of the prejudices and the superficial lines of thinking of his discussion partners, but did not proclaim his insights dogmatically. He attempted to make his partner discover a higher insight himself through dialogue or, even more subtly, by helping him to achieve this insight himself. Plato wrote or recorded the dialogues and it is, obviously, questionable whether these conversations really took place in this way. Apart from these, still special, Greek dialogues, the Italian dialogues by Giordano Bruno did not really take place as conversations between (more than) two people either. The unique aspect of these dialogues is that, apart from their dealing with essential and, at the time very modern, vital questions, they also dealt with equality.

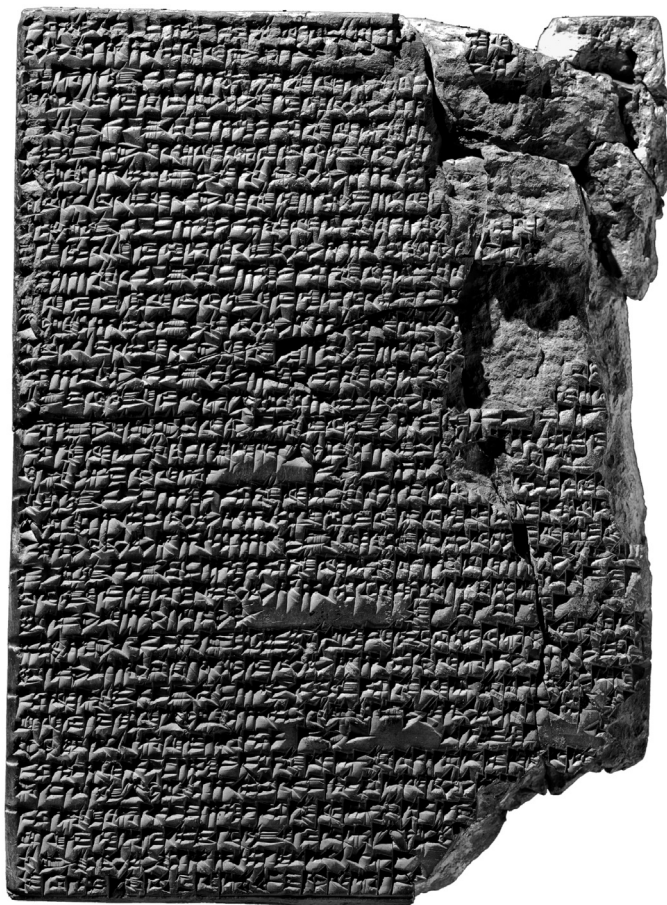
Dresses. The abstract paintings of American artist Derrick Hickman from Grove City, Ohio (USA) stand between the spectator and the story in the painting, 'similarly as romance, the ego and exaggeration (drama) deform our memory'.



DIALOGUE

A CONVERSATION ABOUT CREATION, MAN AND THE LANGUAGE OF THE SOUL





Laws in cuneiform script, around 3000 BC

With the unbridled mental power of his arguments, with humour and erudition, Bruno gave the new European thinking an opportunity to go one step further than the Greeks, and beyond what Aristotle did.

Giordano Bruno leaned heavily on the Egyptian wisdom as it appeared again, amongst other things, through Hermes Trismegistus, also in the form of dialogues, at the beginning of the Christian era. And the condensed form, in which the ancient Egyptian knowledge became visible again, indeed emphasised that Greek thinking was like a boy in short trousers, compared to the wisdom of Egypt, as Solon had already remarked five centuries before.

Hermes, too, showed a rational approach to the extent that he was a teacher. He did so by representing the Gnosis which, after all, is Light, power and knowledge, and which is immaterial, as a teacher who reveals knowledge or gnosis in conversations with pupils. With regard to this knowledge, which is simultaneously comprehending and perceiving profoundly, we cannot speak of equality: here, everyone is a beginning pupil.

Dialogues between people may be called horizontal dialogues, particularly if they are conducted on the basis of equality. Dialogues in a more hierarchical setting might be called vertical dialogues, particularly if this also refers to inner dialogues, as the splendid *Poimandres* of Hermes suggests. *Poimandres*, or *Pymander*, is our inner spirit-soul, our spiritual essence that teaches us wisdom, knowledge, gnosis, provided we are prepared to enter into 'open dialogue' with him.

This Pentagram examines how we can initiate the vertical dialogue, as a spiritual dialogue within ourselves.

However, through reason, rationality, communication, and the exchange of ideas that surpass triviality, the vertical as well as the horizontal dialogues are important, the inner as well as the interhuman ones. Hermes even suggests that we need opposites to achieve growth, not postulates, but opposites. And Cusanus (Nicholas of Cusa, 1401-1464) spoke quite early in European civilisation about

Since time immemorial, our thinking is expressed through words. We might also say: the word is the instrument of the Spirit for transmitting ideas. This is true on more than one level. Ideas become visible through writing. Words resound and form a living stream of ideas, from high to low. Letters form words on a material level. The letter forms the image, the image corresponds to the word, the word bears the idea; dialogue is created.

the unity of the opposites. And what is then formed is a cross of dialogues, the centre of which is like a window to the great reality, a 'dialogue window' to the spiritual dimension. We, the readers, in this way prepare our reason or our inner being as the place for a living dialogue, as a crossroads... and through wisdom, we become aware of the ultimate unity of the opposites within ourselves. Then the dialogue is complete, the conversation has become constructive and communicative. Then we are 'in' dialogue.

This issue of the Pentagram intends to offer a few building stones that might be helpful in gaining consciousness. With many examples of dialogues – vertical as well as horizontal ones – we will try to illustrate this, from Socrates to Boehme, from Plato to Bruno, but also with modern dialogues. Isn't there a huge diversity of universal wisdom, including non-western writings like the Mahabharata (a part of which is the Bhagavad Gita), the Vedas, the literature from Daoism, and many other texts? Time and again, all these texts show that, whatever state of detachment souls may reach during their development, there are always fellow human beings with whom we should speak and with whom we should exchange ideas.

In his books, J. van Rijckenborgh explained that what is 'rational' concerns the mental aspect, and what is 'moral' concerns understanding and accepting a corresponding mode of

life. Spinoza taught us: 'He who understands, is free.'

The power of the gnosis or the 'knowledge of the heart' is able to work, if we grasp the idea of 'not to know anything and not to be capable of anything' solely on the basis of our personality. From apparent opposites, we learn the nature of the unity of opposites that is so important for growth of the consciousness and so beneficial to the everyday conditions in the world. The inner unity of opposites cannot be achieved until we discover the extent to which we need opposites – that is, the dialogue – for our inner development.

How this process develops in someone, occupied with studying the hermetic gnosis, is the subject of this issue of the Pentagram, in the context of which we would like to show that this concerns a living development within what we call the modern path of the Rosycross.

A splendid example of the elegant way in which the sharply thinking Hermeticists, the followers of the ideas of Hermes, show the existence of God, will follow below, with an introduction by J. van Rijckenborgh, *The General Dialogue between Hermes and Aesclepius* ☸

the general dialogue between hermes and aesclepius

J. van Rijckenborgh

In antiquity, Aesclepius or Aesculapius was the god of medicine. In a broader sense, Aesculapius is therefore also the helper, the healer. In the following dialogue, Hermes teaches a pupil who, witness his name, is aware of having been called to walk the path of service to the Gnosis, to be able to cooperate in the healing of diseased humanity, to raise what has fallen, and to restore what was broken. In the sixth hermetic book, Aesclepius is given a thorough introduction into the nature of motion, into the cause and effect of the movement of the All.

Hermetic philosophy always develops its reasoning on the basis of a very elementary beginning and then proceeds to what is highly abstract. All who use this key and do not deviate from it, will always be able gradually to think it through and finally understand what should be understood. Many people usually begin their thinking processes with what is abstract, with what is unknowable and then descend to what is concrete. Such a method of thinking can never be satisfactory and will always lead to speculation and mystification. For instance, a mystical person often says that this or that should or should not be done. The reason for it usually remains vague and thus often results in either denial or acceptance on the basis of authority. Then it is claimed: 'The Bible is the word of God. Not the smallest part of it may be denied.' However, no one knows why the Bible in particular is God's word. The result is that one person accepts on authority what another denies, while a third one does neither, but is

wholly indifferent to it. This way of thinking does not in any way serve the truth. It is replaced by vagueness, lies and serious conflict. The hermetic method of thinking is the only safe and correct one, because it guides our thinking from what is knowable and concrete to what is abstract.

This is why the Arch-Gnosis always used this method. All people who yearn for and seek liberation receive this method, because it yields the purest results. You will therefore always be able to judge from a person's way of thinking whether or not someone is a true seeker for the truth. A clear example of this was Baruch de Spinoza, who undoubtedly used the hermetic method of thinking.

In *The General Dialogue between Hermes and Aesclepius*, we once again see that there is an all-encompassing source of power that surrounds and pervades everything and contains all cosmic realms. The aim of the sixth book of Hermes Trismegistus is to convince us of this. It is not intended to provide a profound



Jan van Rijckenborgh was one of the founders of the Spiritual School of the Golden Rosycross. In this School, he explained and exemplified the path of the liberation of the soul to his pupils in all kinds of ways, often on the basis of original texts from the universal teachings.



DIALOGUE



**Ornamental flower
in wall mosaic in the
Taj Mahal, India**

For us, God is the highest object to which the thinking can direct itself; for us, but not for God himself

philosophical treatise about the essence of God or the activity of the divine power. What only matters is to explain to the pupil, Aesclepius, who has become aware of the lofty task to which man has been called in the name of God and who, in self-surrender and devotion, tries to walk the path of the Gnosis, that he should forge a link with this source of power. Our insignificant existence as unconscious natural beings on this earth is the most illogical phenomenon in the whole all-manifestation. He, who is linked with the radiation of the source of power, will be sanctified, that is, healed. By the miracle of the grace of his healing he will, in his turn, become a healer in the service of the Gnosis, a mature Aesclepius.

The General Dialogue above all appeals to our insight, to our inner thinking. We are not only asked to listen, but also to participate in thinking and to descend into our inner being where, in serene tranquillity and silence, the eternal call of the true human fate can be heard and understood.

THE GENERAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN HERMES AND AESCLEPIUS

Hermes: All that is moved, Aesclepius, is it not moved in something and by something? Aesclepius: Most certainly!

Hermes: And is not the space in which something is moved necessarily greater than the thing moved? Aesclepius: No doubt.

Hermes: Also, is not that which causes movement stronger than what is moved? Aesclepius: Of course it is.

Hermes: Must not that in which movement takes place necessarily be of opposite nature to the thing moved? Aesclepius: Naturally.

Hermes: Well then, is this Universe not greater than any other body? Aesclepius: Yes, certainly.

Hermes: And is it not entirely filled with many other great bodies, or rather, with all the bodies that exist? Aesclepius: It is so.

Hermes: Thus the Universe is a body. Aesclepius: Yes, certainly.

Hermes: And it is a body that is moved. Aesclepius: Yes, certainly.

Hermes: Of what size then must be the space in which the universe is moved, and of what kind? Must it not be far greater than the universe in order to allow continuous movement, without the universe becoming oppressed and so stopping its motion? Aesclepius: Immensely vast must be that space, O Trismegistus.

Hermes: Is it not of an opposite nature, Aesclepius? The opposite of the nature of the body is the incorporeal. Aesclepius: Undoubtedly.

Hermes: Space then is incorporeal. But the

incorporeal is either of a divine nature or it is God. (By divine I do not mean what has been created, but what has not been created). If the incorporeal is of a divine nature, it has the nature of the essence of creation; and if it is God it is one with the nucleus. Indeed, it may be comprehended as follows:

For us, God is the highest object to which the thinking can direct itself; for us, but not for God himself. For the object of contemplation becomes attainable for the one who thinks in the light of insight. Therefore, for himself God is not an object of contemplation; for as he is not separate from the essence of contemplation, he contemplates himself. For us, however, God is separate: that is why he is the object of our thinking.

When we now consider universal space, we perceive it not as space, but as God; and if, for our thinking, space appears as God, it is no longer space in the customary sense of the word, but the effective power of God which embraces everything.

All that is moved does not move in something that is moved itself, but in something that is immovable; the motive force itself is also immovable, because it cannot take part in the movement it causes.

Aesclepius: But, Trismegistus, in what manner then are the things here on earth moved

together with the things causing their movement? For you said that the sinful spheres are moved by the spheres of the sinless.

Hermes: Here, Aesclepius, is no question of a common movement, but of a counter-movement. For these spheres are not moved in the same direction, but in opposite directions. This antithesis gives the movement a fixed point of equilibrium, because the reaction of the opposite movements manifests itself in this point as immovability.

As the sinful spheres are moved in a direction opposite to that of the sinless sphere, they are moved, in this counter-movement, by the stationary point of equilibrium around the resisting sphere. It really cannot be otherwise.

You see there the constellations of the Great and Little Bear, which do not set and do not rise and always turn around the same point: do you think that they are moved or do they stand still?

Aesclepius: They are moved, Trismegistus.

Hermes: And of what kind is their movement, Aesclepius? *Aesclepius:* They continuously turn around the same centres.

Hermes: Correct. So the circulation is nothing but the movement around the same centre, a movement which is completely governed by

the immovability of the centre. The revolution forestalls deviation, and by forestalling the deviation the revolution is perpetuated. Thus the counter-movement also stands still in the point of equilibrium, because it becomes static through the resisting movement.

I will give you a simple example, the correctness of which you can confirm with your own eyes. Look at mortal beings such as man when they swim: while the water flows, the resistance, the counter-force of the swimmer's hands and feet keep him stationary, so that he is not pulled down by the water.

Aesclepius: This example is very clear, Trismegistus.

Hermes: Every movement is thus caused in something and by something which itself is immovable. The movement of the Universe and of every corporeal living being is thus not brought about by causes outside the body, but by causes within the body, operating outwards from within by means of a conscious, rational force, be it the soul, the spirit or any other incorporeal entity. For a material body is incapable of moving an animated body, nor can it move any body at all, not even an inanimate body.

Aesclepius: What do you mean by this, Trismegistus? Wood and stones and other inanimate things, are they not bodies causing movement?

Hermes: Most certainly not, Aesclepius. For it is not the body itself that causes the movement of the inanimate, but what is within the body, and that is what moves both bodies: the body which moves and the body which is being moved. That is why the inanimate cannot move the inanimate. So you see how heavily burdened the soul is when, alone, it must carry two bodies. It is thus clear that what is moved, moves in something and is being moved by something.

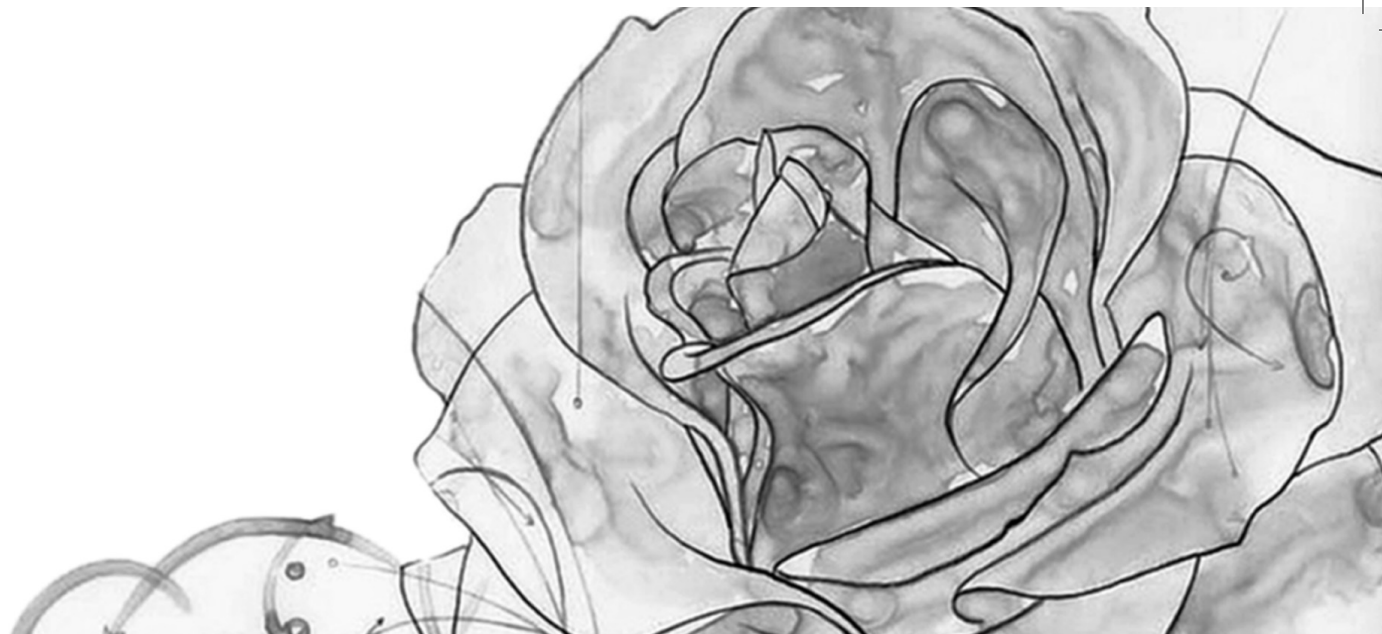
Aesclepius: Must movement be brought about in an empty space, Trismegistus?

Hermes: Listen well, Aesclepius: Nothing of what really is, is void; nothing that is part of what really exists is void, just as it is expressed by the verb 'to be', which means 'to exist'. For what is would not have reality, would not be, were it not perfectly filled with reality. What really is, what really exists, can therefore never be void.

Aesclepius: Then are there no empty things, Trismegistus, such as jars, pots, vats and a variety of other such things?

Hermes: Stop it, Aesclepius! How can you make such a mistake? How can you take for void what is completely full and filled?

Aesclepius: What do you mean by that, Trismegistus?



Hermes: Is not air a body? Does not this body permeate all that exists and does it not fill all that it permeates? Is not every physical body composed of the four elements? Full of air, then, are all things you call void and if they are full of air, they are also filled with the four bodies of the elements. So we come to a conclusion opposite to the one you made: everything you call full is void of air, because the place of the air is occupied by other bodies, so that there is no room to admit air. All things you call void must be called filled to overflowing and not void: because in reality they are full of air and breath.

Aesclepius: There is no disputing that, Trismegistus. But what again did we say that space was, in which the universe is moved?

Hermes: It is incorporeal, Aesclepius. Aesclepius: And what, then, is the incorporeal?

Hermes: It is Spirit, completely encompassed within itself, free from all corporeality, free from error, free from suffering, intangible, immovable in itself, containing everything, saving, liberating and healing everything; that from which the good, the truth, the archetype of the Spirit and the archetype of the Soul emanate like rays.

Aesclepius: But what, then, is God?

Hermes: He is none of all these, but the cause

of their existence and of all that is, also of each creature in particular. He has left no space at all for the non-existent; all that exists comes into being from what is and not from what is not: for the non-existent lacks the ability of genesis while, on the other hand, what exists will never cease to exist.

Aesclepius: But what do you say God actually is?

Hermes: God is not reason, but the cause to which reason owes its being; He is not breath, but the cause to which breath owes its being; He is not light, but the cause to which light owes its being. Therefore, God should be worshipped as 'the good' and 'Father', names which belong to Him alone and to no one else. For none of those called god, nor any man or demon, can be good in any degree, but God alone. He alone is good and no one else. All others cannot comprehend the essence of the good. They are body and soul and lack the place where The Good can reside. For the good comprises what is the essence of all creatures, both corporeal and incorporeal, both perceptible and those belonging to the world of abstract thought. This is the good, this is God.

Therefore, never call anything else good, because that is godless. And never call God anything else than the good, because that too would be godless.

But God is the good not on the basis of homage but by virtue of his essence

Indeed, all use the word 'good', but not all understand what it is. That is why not everyone understands God and so, in ignorance, they call the gods and some men good, although these can never be or become good because the good is the absolutely unchangeable characteristic of God. It is inseparable from Him because, indeed, it is God Himself.

All other gods, as immortal ones, are honoured by the name 'god'. But God is the good not on the basis of homage but by virtue of his essence. The essence of God and the essence of the good are one: they form together the one origin of all races. Good is He who gives all and does not take anything. Indeed, God gives all and does not take anything. Therefore, God is the good and the good is God.

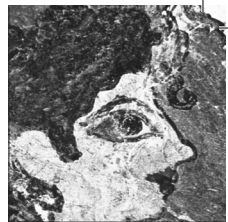
The other name of God is Father, because He is the creator of all things. Creating is the characteristic of the Father.

Therefore, in the life of those whose consciousness is correctly directed, to give birth to the Son is a matter of great seriousness and zeal and of deepest attachment to God; while it is the greatest misfortune and the greatest

sin for someone to die without the childship of God and to be punished by the demons after death.

This is the punishment: the soul of this childless one will be condemned to assume a body that is neither male nor female, which is a doom emanating from the Sun. Thus, Aesclepius, participate in joy if no one is without childship, but embrace with your compassion the one who stands in misfortune, because you know what punishment awaits him.

May the nature and scope of what I have said, Aesclepius, provide you with preliminary knowledge regarding the essence of the All ✪



DIALOGUE

it is in dialogue that we live, **everything speaks in us**

'But, as it is written: 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him... For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.'

1 Cor. 2:9,10

Try to imagine 'what no eye has seen, nor ear heard...' Try to imagine this, because you are a human being who wants to know. Wanting to know is one of those things that characterise the human phenomenon. Moreover, if a person is able to combine his knowledge with his imagination, with the rich world of ideas, he surpasses in this way any other creature here on earth.

To start at the beginning, we therefore place ourselves before the familiar text from the Gospel of John: 'In the beginning was the word,' that is, in the infinite greatness of the beginning, not in the sense of a universe, but as the source of any universe. It refers to the depth, in



which the primordial sea of forms can only be found as a single speck that the Gnostics called 'the abyss' or 'the depth'. Depth: there, in the divine silence and eternal rest, the energy of the beginning became breath and spiritual power. In the rest of the universe movement was generated, the Gospel of Thomas says, or the word, as we can read in the Gospel of John.

It is said: 'Man has been generated from a thought of God.' And through the word, by expressing the thought, he became man. Anyone who tries to describe this might say that there was a voice from this depth, in this silence, saying: Come to me! Man was called; a dialogue began... When a movement is created, this is always followed by a new movement. Life is movement; movement is sound; everything speaks. As long as creation is in motion, the Creator speaks with his creature. Everyone is born from a set of parents; a man and a woman were the cause of his existence. They may be able to beget a child, but do they give it life or form? Can they determine its lifespan, its health or give the child characteristics like goodness, its laugh, its experiences of pain or longing, or the miracle of its eyes so that it is able to see? When a child is born, we expect it to have all of this at its disposal, for this is how it is able to express itself in life as we know it. We can actually only say that life is manifestation, so that it is seen, experienced or lived. It is finding oneself in a form, by which and in which some-

thing can express itself. This something that wants to express itself might be called the first thought, the 'immortal, firstborn one' of the first father.

What is man's purpose? Is it perhaps learning how to speak and to be like the father and become perfect! 'Then become perfect as the Father.' Hermes Trismegistus says:

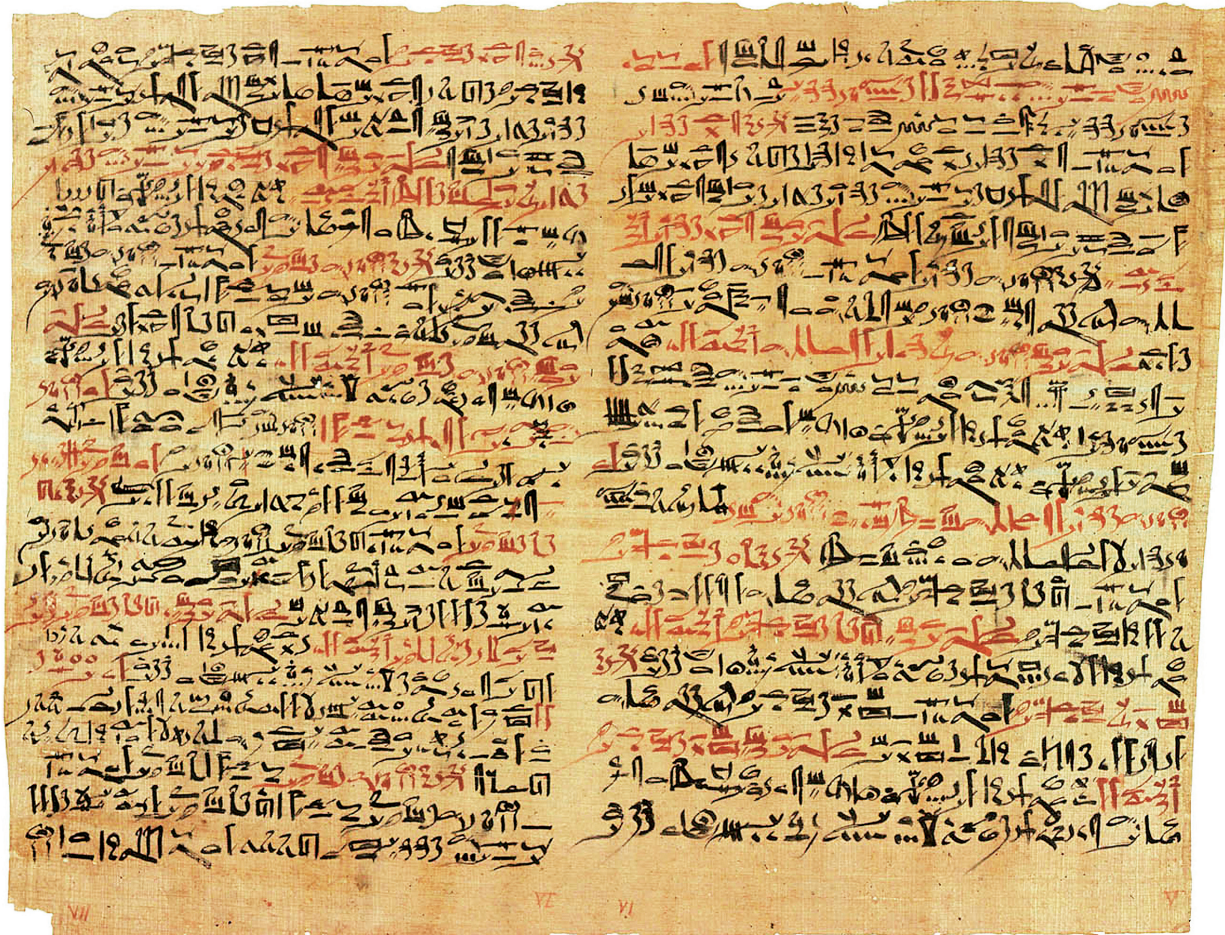
'As the gods are the property of God, so is man. And the world is the property of man: if there would not be anyone to see this world, what could be seen, would not even exist. Only man understands the spiritual things and sees what is visible, because they are not strange to him. Man has both natures, the mortal and the immortal one. The human being has three forms of being: the spiritual, the ensouled and the material one.'

Hermetic Definitions, VI, 1

THREE POINTS OF DEPARTURE When we open our eyes, after having been born as human beings in this world, and we set out on this adventure, we are immediately confronted with these three forms of being. We experience ourselves as consciousness; we see the people next to us, and the world or nature surrounding us. In this way, we have been given three keys to find the question that we ask ourselves rather quickly as well as the answers to this question.

The question is: What did I come here to do, for heaven's sake?

And the keys for discovering the answer are:



The Edwin Smith Papyrus deals with Old-Egyptian medicinal remedies and the treatment of wounds (around 1600 BC) © Malloch Rare Book Room of the New York Academy of Medicine

1. Nature as the teacher
2. Self-knowledge through dealing with our fellow human beings
3. Becoming acquainted with the inner other one, the soul.

The world appears to us as an infinite source of impressions, things to be experienced and a continuous succession of new impressions. Life possibly stems from the need for 'something divine' that wants to experience things, quite simply by repeating what was before: the Creator gives life, so that life is able to perceive itself. However, a problem also crops up. Gnostic science speaks of 'silence' and calls this 'the Ungrund' of the deep not-being. And from this depth, the call for the Spirit

resounds that is diffusely 'hidden' in this nothingness: 'Come to me' – and creation begins! This Ungrund contains: 'a depth, a silence, a rest, and a (hidden) movement.' This same process is repeated during each birth in matter: a human being is born. He only knows the longing for the sphere, from which he came (the mother). This is the only thing of which he is conscious: conscious of something within him that calls: 'Return!'

THE FIRE THAT NOURISHES ITSELF Our whole life is a path of development and when the exchange, the dialogue, between ourselves and the world can no longer take place, life, our development, stops and the soul withdraws.

Do you want to read the history of the self-born king?
Then first read the splendid language of the sun, the
language of the stars, the timid whispering of the moon,
the music of the planets and of one, our mother earth
that hums her lullaby for her uncounted infants who, if
their soul has reached maturity, belong to heaven.

James Morgan Pryse

To protect us against this, the three keys may form an always renewing and deepening source of inspiration:

- Nature is the teacher of man and of the art of living. Nature teaches the basic features of being in the world; in a person, this ultimately generates the great questions of life. If we fathom them more deeply, we will see how everything is interrelated and mutually interacts. Nature is continuous change and thus is transient. This is why the truly seeking person is able to experience everything transient symbolically or as a metaphor.
- Through interaction with our fellow human beings as well as with nature, we become acquainted not only with ourselves, with our limitations, for instance, in our interaction with others, but also with the way in which we achieve compassion, with our own impotence and our unexpected powers of what to do and what not to do. Through these contacts, we discover our own uniqueness, and subsequently we learn to see that every other human being does the same (or might do so)! In principle, we are all equal: we proceed from what is individual to what is universal.
- On the basis of the loneliness of the self-consciousness and experiencing its limitations, we reach the other one. He who knows himself, is able to become acquainted with the inner other one, the soul.

These are the teachings of the mystery schools. Initiation is being silent and occurs in a dialogue with the inner other one. This

is what is meant by ‘the fire that nourishes itself’. Then thinking is the inner dialogue.

SOCRATES Many beautiful dialogues, those of famous and great philosophers, modest mystics, of Jesus, or of someone like you and me, have been recorded. Throughout time and all over the world, we can find dialogues, conversations, that accompany us on our way of examining our life as human beings. They are conversations in which we can become involved, so that they allow us to participate in them.

Socrates was perhaps the master of the dialogue. In every conversation, he asked the core question: ‘How should I live?’ Socrates (469–399 BC) was a familiar figure in classical Athens. He considered it his task to walk about in Athens daily, surrounded by a number of followers – amongst whom were many young people – and to engage in conversations with all kinds of people: about the good, the beautiful and the truth. Regarding himself, he said: ‘I am the midwife of my friends (referring to his mother who was a midwife). I am not interested in the body, but in the soul that is in labour. I ask and ask and ask, until the hidden fruit of their insight suddenly sees the light.’

He wanted to bring to light the hidden qualities of people, which they unknowingly bear within them. Ignorance is the source of all evil. He wanted to liberate them from the impediments and limitations that block the

O, hear my prayer
that I may never lose contact
with the one in the play of many.

Rabindranath Tagore

Look how illustrious and great the glory of the
eternal world is that is forever able to divide
its power and majesty in so many mirrors, itself
remaining one as it was before.

Dante

development of the soul and torment it. In a dialogue with Tat, Hermes called the unconscious use and maintenance of these impediments: 'castigating'.

Tat asks Hermes: 'Do I have castigators within me, Father?'

Hermes: 'You have not a few, my son, and they are terrifying and numerous.'

Tat: 'I do not know them, Father.'

Hermes: 'This very ignorance is the first castigation, my son; the second one is grief and sorrow; the third intemperance.'

And then another nine follow, because 'these castigations are twelve, but there are many more which, by means of the prison of the body, force the human being by their nature to suffer through the activity of the senses. However, when God has had mercy on the human being,' says Hermes, 'they desist, albeit not immediately. And the latter explains the nature and significance of rebirth.' *Hermes Trismegistus, Fourteenth Book, verses 26-29*

Ignorance is the greatest plague among people. And the Biblical complaint: 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge', is to the same effect. In this context, 'lack of knowledge' might be interpreted as: not being engaged in a dialogue with the deity, not knowing of the existence of what is divine by not occupying ourselves with it or even cutting ourselves off from it in the illusion that the world of the body and of sensory perception implies the highest form of being human. Man is twofold; his body is mortal, but his

soul is immortal. As human beings, we should be seriously occupied with the question what we are doing here. We should try to gain insight into our situation, and ask: what is the soul, immortality, and the inner other one? What is the purpose of myself, who has a form at my disposal, through which I am able to express myself? How should I use this condition instead of allowing the situation and the chances to slip by due to the seemingly insoluble problems that this situation evokes? One of the dialogues with Socrates tries to find the essence of the soul as the immortal one and that of the body as the mortal one. The question underlying this conversation is: how important is the life of a human being for the soul, if the human being dies, though it, the soul, continues?

Should we be worried about our soul? In Socrates' last conversation before his death, we read:

'Let us therefore, if you want, distinguish two kinds of things, the one visible, the other invisible.'

'Yes, let us make this distinction.'

'Will the invisible always remain equal to itself, but the visible never?'

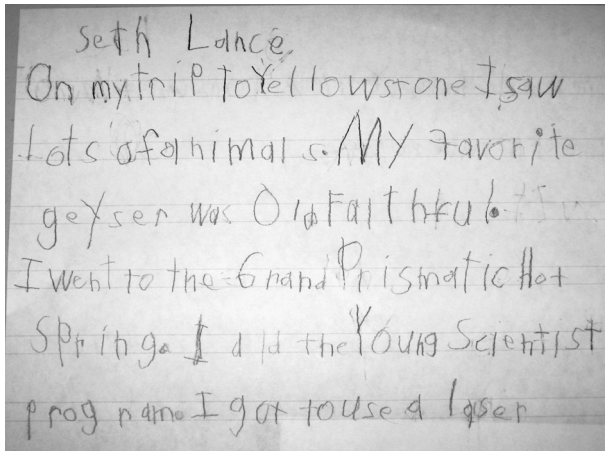
'Let us also assume this.'

'Well,' he said, 'is our personality not part body, part soul?'

'Nothing else,' he said.

'To which of these two kinds do we now say that the body is more equal and akin?'

He said: 'This is clear to everyone, to the vis-



ible part.'

'And the soul? Is it something visible or invisible?'

'It is not visible, at least not to people, Socrates.'

'But do we not speak of what is visible and what is not visible to human nature? Or to another one?'

'To the human one.'

'What shall we now say about the soul? Is it something visible or something invisible?'

'Not visible.'

'Invisible, therefore?'

'Yes.'

'Then the soul is more than the body equal to what is invisible and the body to what is visible.'

'Without any doubt, Socrates.'

'Did we not notice a moment ago that the soul, when it uses the body to perceive something by seeing or hearing or by any other sensory organ – for perceiving something by means of the body means using some sensory organ – that the soul is then dragged along by the body to the things that never remain equal to themselves, and that it wanders about and becomes entangled and dizzy like a drinker, because it comes into contact with such things?'

'Certainly.'

'However, when it considers something of its own accord, it moves to this other world, to what is pure and permanent and immortal and the same, and it is – because it is akin to

it – already linked with that world, whenever it stands by itself and is allowed to do so.

Its wandering has ended and it is always the same and unchangingly linked with this other world, because it is in contact with things of that nature. And this state is called insight.'

Phaedo 26, Plato's Dialogues

In this way, the problem has been sharply defined: neither situation is constant, or lasting. It is the task of humanity to solve this! During all our life, the call resounding at birth, is therefore repeated: Return, return!

A Hassidic legend by Martin Buber (1878-1965) describes how God continuously appeals to a human being.

'Where are you?'

A man asked a rabbi: 'How are we to understand that God said to Adam: 'Where are you?'

The rabbi answered: 'Do you believe that the Scriptures are eternal and that every era, every generation and every man is included in them?' 'I believe this,' said the other. 'Well then, in every era, God calls to every man:

'Where are you in your world? So many years and days of those allotted to you have passed, and how far have you gotten in your world?'

The rabbi's answer actually means: 'You yourself are Adam, you are the man whom God asks: 'Where are you?' In so asking, God wants to produce an effect in man which can only be produced by just such a question, pro-

... that by an inner flash of recognition the knowledge of the soul can be manifested again in our consciousness!

vided that it reaches man's heart and that man allows it to reach his heart.

Adam hides himself to avoid rendering accounts, to escape responsibility for his way of living. Every man hides for this purpose, for every man is Adam and finds himself in Adam's situation. To escape responsibility for his life, he turns existence into a system of hideouts.

True, in him too there is something that seeks Him, but Adam makes it harder and harder for that 'something' to find him. This is the situation into which God's question falls.

This question is designed to awaken man and destroy his system of hideouts; it is to show man to what pass he has come and to awaken in him the great will to get out of it. But his system of hideouts will help to overcome this emotion. For the Voice does not come in a thunderstorm which threatens man's very existence; it is a 'still small voice', and easy to drown. *Martin Buber, 'The Way of Man'* <http://www.uwec.edu/beachea/buber.html>

J. van Rijckenborgh concisely summarised the situation in his book *The Egyptian Arch-Gnosis*: 'Why do you possess a body? Is it so that you can kick up your heels here for a few years, going through trouble and strife of every possible variety, and to pursue some career in society, to keep your head above water, only to die in the end? And so that you can spend all those years just drowning in your nerve ether, in evil (a concept of Hermes, referring

to our finite, mortal nature)? Just fighting and struggling? Is that the aim of your life?' *The Egyptian Arch-Gnosis*, part 4, chapter VII, p.65
Indeed, why do we possess a body? The body, says Hermes, is an instrument, a property of the soul in order to be able to act in the service of the soul, as a servant of the soul.

The longing of the original soul is, after all, pure; it does not like anything better than to contemplate its first creation and develop other possibilities that it received from the Most High. Because it is 'invisible', its happiness can be found in intangible things, because the soul has been created to link itself with the invisible spirit and to find its rest in it. It only wants to attract its 'food' or higher energy from the highest spheres. However, in the reality of the secular conditions, the soul is only taken along on an ever-wilder journey through life and becomes acquainted with the pleasures of nature. This goes so far that the soul, having become weak, thinks that it should live in this way...

However, the special aspect of us human beings, is that we can be awakened again from this weakness, which is like a sleep, by Gnosis, gnostic insight and the corresponding, liberating energy and that, by an inner flash of recognition, the knowledge of the soul can be manifested again in our consciousness! Then a radical change is generated: from that moment, the soul assumes control! It asks itself: what should I do to regain my first love? ♀



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a conversation about creation



DIALOGUE

A dialogue about creation deals with life in or with nature, the world in which we must or rather are able to live. This world is at our disposal and waits for us with its time-spatial coherence. It surrounds us with its symbols which speak to us in a wordless language. These symbols represent their own world, with which we are able to experience a relationship, but in which we will never participate directly.

The language of creation whispers through the trees, rustles in the brooks, teaches us the beauty of flowers, and unveils life in the light of the sun, mystery in the glow of the moon, hope in the stars and joy in wings. Jacob Boehme is sometimes called a nature philosopher. In *Christosophia*, he says: 'In nature, we see the great edifice of God, and through God we know that it is his will that his word is also manifested in the light of nature; this nature force is still untamed.'

We are able to experience nature; we are able to forge a link with it, but it 'allows us to experience it'. Martin Buber gave an example that may clarify this somewhat. 'I look at a tree. I am able to assimilate its image: a rigid, rising pillar, against which the light bumps, or a shattering green through which the soft blue-silver of the background streams. I can perceive it as movement, the streaming veins against the sticky, striving heartwood, the suction of the roots, the respiration of the leaves, an infinite contact with earth and air – and the dark growth itself.

I may classify it by species and observe the structure and the way of living of a specimen. I can detach from the form of this single tree to the extent that I only recognise it as the expression of a law – of laws according to which opposite forces gradually reach a balance or of laws according to which substances are mixed and dissolved. [...] The tree is not an impression, not a play of my imagination, not a value of my mood, but it stands before

me in person and has to deal with me, as I with it – only differently.'

Martin Buber, 'I and you'

We might now say: the tree produces the oxygen by which I can breathe and is therefore necessary for my existence, and nature is my source of food without which I would be unable to live. However, this is also a property of the whole of creation; everything sustains everything. This is why the study of nature is the study of the language of its symbols, or of the order and laws through which nature is manifested.

Let us now look at nature as at an amazing book, in which we can read and discover what it has to tell us, though on the basis of the hermetic idea: As above, so below; as in what is large, so also in what is small. The human being as a microcosm, a small world, is the image of the macrocosm, the big world. We consider the sun the centre of our planetary system as well as the source of life. The centre of a human being is the heart with its divine nucleus. Where does the sun have its source, its centre? In what is it anchored?

WHAT EXISTED BEFORE THE BIG BANG? Arie Bos, physician and teacher of the philosophy of science, probably answers this question in a recognisable and acceptable way in his book *Hoe de geest de stof kreeg* (How the spirit received matter):

'Why is there actually something instead of

'Only the soul consciousness sees what is invisible, because it is itself invisible.

If you are able to do so, O Tat, he will become visible for the eyes of your Spirit-Soul, because the Lord shows himself throughout the whole universe in bountiful abundance.

Are you able to see your soul consciousness and to grasp it with your hands, and can you admiringly observe God's image? If what is within you is invisible to you, how then should God himself become visible within you by means of your physical eyes?

If you wish to see him, focus your attention on the sun, on the course of the moon, on the regular movements of the stars.

nothing? Isn't this a question that cannot possibly be answered? As far as I am concerned, this is amazing enough. Yet, let us follow modern physics and assume that everything began with the big bang, but which could by definition not have been predicted by any science. Nothing existed preceding it. Are we not amazed that the big bang did not have a cause? I always had the feeling that we wholly lost our awe of it, if we ever had it anyway. [...]

'Did you want to say that, because there was no cause, a God created all of this?'

Wait a minute. I did not yet speak of God at all. What I wanted to say is that, if the energy and the quarks had a cause, this cause could only be described as information. In the beginning was information. In the beginning was the word. 'Word' is the translation of the Greek 'Logos'. This means number, account, word, thought (content) and spirit (as the creative power). Information might be a modern translation.

The big bang caused waves. Waves may operate as information carriers, like photons are able to do. Therefore, matter began as information. By the way, matter still consists of information. We know that matter consists of elementary particles that are certainly not particles, but energy packages, once again in the form of waves. [...]

Complex information stands behind any substance, formed by atoms. Substance means 'what is standing under it', under the infor-

mation, we might say. This is why every substance represents information, just a modern word for wisdom. If we share information, we share wisdom, and therefore actually spirit. In other words, there is no matter without spirit. People have never been able to imagine that wisdom would float freely in the air, like the spirit of God that moved over the face of the primordial waters, or like the Holy Spirit. It is nowadays also physically quite plausible that this does not have to be physically visible. The only thing that is physically visible is the matter that comes under it, substance. And what it began with, the primordial information, was called God.'

The conclusion of the book describes that the purpose of creation is for humanity to voluntarily choose love, because in no other way will the Spirit link itself so strongly with matter as in a being that is sufficiently free to control itself: man. However, in order to protect ourselves against ignorance, let us follow a dialogue that gives deeper insight into the relationship between man and nature, recorded at the end of the sixteenth century by Giordano Bruno in *The Infinite, the Universe and the Worlds*. (First dialogue: discussion partners: Elpino, Filoteo, Fracastorio, Burchio):

Elpino: 'How could the universe be infinite?'

Filoteo: 'How could the universe be finite?'

Elpino: 'Do you want to contend that this infinity can be shown?'

Filoteo: 'Do you want to contend that this finiteness can be shown?'

Who watches over this order? For every order is accurately determined as to its number and place.

The sun, the greatest of the gods of the firmament, for whom all the heavenly gods reverently make way, as if to their king and overlord; this awe-inspiringly great one, greater than earth and sea, submits to having smaller stars moving above him. Out of reverence for whom, for fear of whom is he doing so, my son? Does not each of these stars describe an equal or similar course in the firmament? Who has assigned to each of them the kind and size of its path?

Look at the Great Bear, which rotates about its own axis and

crosses the entire firmament in its rotation. Who is it that owns this instrument? Who is it that has confined the sea within its shores? Who is it that has fixed the earth in its foundation?

It is, O Tat, the Creator and Lord of the all. No place, nor any number, nor any measure, as an expression of the cosmic order, would be possible without him who has created it. Every order is the result of a creating activity. Only what is without order and without bounds proves the absence of a creating activity.

Hermes Trismegistus, eighth book: Hermes to his son Tat, verses 8-16

Elpino: 'What does this expansion imply?'

Filoteo: 'What does this limitation imply?'

Burchio: 'Even if it were true, I still would not believe it, because I am unable to grasp this infinity mentally, and I am at a loss what to do with it; although, quite honestly, I would like it to be as Filoteo contends, because if I would then accidentally fall off this world, I would at least land somewhere!'

Elpino: 'One thing is certain, Filoteo, if we were to appoint our senses as judges... then we would probably discover that it is harder to find arguments for what you contend than for the opposite. Therefore, be so kind as to begin with your explanation.'

Filoteo: 'There is no sensory organ that sees infinity, and no sensory organ from which this conclusion is expected, because infinity cannot be grasped by the senses. This is why someone who wants to become acquainted with infinity through the senses, resembles someone who wants to see the substance and the essence with his eyes. And he who would deny the existence of something, because it is not perceptible or visible, would in this way also deny his own substance and existence. This is why the senses should only be summoned in moderation: we only rely on them with regard to perceptible matters, and even then there is cause for suspicion, if they do not reach their judgement together with reason. It is up to the mind to reach a judgement concerning things that are not present and about things that are separated by distance as

to time and place, and to take this into account. [...] The senses more than suffice as witnesses, as they are unable to contradict us, and moreover demonstrate their weakness and inadequacy, because by their self-imposed horizon, they give the impression of finiteness, and their manifestation once again shows how fickle they are. And as we know from experience that they deceive us with regard to the surface of this globe, on which we live, we should have an even greater distrust of the limitation of the firmament with which they delude us.'

Elpino: 'What purpose do the senses serve then?'

Filoteo: 'Solely to stimulate reason, to accuse, to point out and to give partial testimony only; not to give a complete testimony, and even less to judge or to condemn. However perfect they may be, the senses are never devoid of some clouding. This is why the truth only stems for a minor part from the senses, as from a weak origin, but is not to be found in the senses.'

Elpino: 'Then, where can it be found?'

Filoteo: 'In perceptible objects, like in a mirror. In reason, in the form of arguments and in discourse. In the mind, in the form of principle or result. In the spirit, in its own living form.'

Giordano Bruno, The Infinite, the Universe and the Worlds

Fragment from the oldest handwriting of the New Testament, part of the Codex Sinaiticus, around 350 AD



HERMES AND TAT From this follows that the human being, who largely originates from nature and lives and exists through nature, may experience that there is more than nature. As a being of this nature, he is able to do so by learning not to see nature as the [only] reality. He is able to do so by learning to see nature, everything that is, as the expression of something else that enables all these forms. In his ninth book, in a dialogue with Tat, Hermes describes in a probing way that this other aspect is life itself that always flows, always continues and always finds new ways of expression; and that its beholder gains ever deeper insight that nothing that truly exists will be lost, but that we erroneously refer to the changes as destruction and death.

Hermes: 'The Father formed the body of the world out of all the matter which He had destined for this purpose. He gave it a spherical shape, determined the qualities that were to adorn it and endowed it, since the matter was divine, with eternal materiality. After the Father had radiated the qualities of the species into the sphere, He locked them up in it, as a cave, because He desired to adorn His creation with all characteristics. He surrounded the whole body of the world with immortality so that, if matter sought to break away from the body's cohesive force, it would not return to the chaos peculiar to it. When matter had not yet been formed into a body, my son, it was in a state of chaos. It

even now gives evidence of this, to a certain extent, by its ability to increase and decrease, an ability which men call death. This disorder, this return to chaos, only occurs in earthly creatures. The bodies of heavenly beings maintain the order assigned to them in the beginning by the Father. This order is indestructibly preserved for the return of each of them to the state of perfection. The return of earthly bodies in their former condition consists in the disintegration of the force of cohesion, which turns them back into bodies which cannot be disintegrated, or in other words, into immortal bodies. So there is indeed a falling away of the consciousness of the senses, but no annihilation of the bodies. The third living being is man, who has been created in the image of the world and, in accordance with the Father's will, is above the other earthly animals in that he possesses reason. He is not only closely connected with the second God but also approaches, in his inner contemplation, the essence of the first God. With his senses, he perceives the second God as a body, while his insight causes him to recognise the first God as bodiless and as Spirit, as The Good.'

... that they will gradually recognise the voice of the inner, first God who speaks to them!

Tat: 'Is this living being then not subject to annihilation?'

Hermes: 'Rejoice, my son, and understand what God is, what the world is, what an immortal being is, and what a being is that is subject to disintegration. Realise that the world, born of God, is in God; that man, born of the world, is in the world; and that God, the origin of the all, contains and preserves all things in himself.'

Hermes Trismegistus, ninth book, Hermes to his son Tat, verses 6-14

THE SOUL IS AWAITED 'This order is indestructibly preserved for the return of each of them to the state of perfection,' Hermes says in the above quote. By the way, everything that is of nature returns to nature, in a non-composite state. However, the cohesive power, 'the soul' of the indestructible bodies returns, in other words, is able to return, provided the human being 'approaches in his inner contemplation, the essence of the first God.'

It is in this sense that humanity is awaited. The day is awaited that people will discover themselves, and will gradually recognise the voice of the inner, first God who speaks to them, and they consciously listen to and then follow this voice of what we call the rose heart. This is what the whole of creation yearns and hopes for: the change from ignorant, unconscious being to truly knowing, gnosis. Although Jesus' core message in the Christian gospels: 'The Kingdom of God is within you',

could hardly be expressed more clearly, yet only a few individuals truly hear these words as spoken within them.

Let us next consider in this special issue *Dialogue*, a conversation about creation, man and the language of the soul, how this gaining consciousness, via nature, through exchange with others, will lead to the inner dialogue, in which the human being himself ultimately forms the answer! ✨

of man

We can only live through the other one

'I met countless people, I visited numerous places where, it was said, what we seek had ever been clearly visible to people. However, at the end of each day, I returned to my room, my shabby, bare hotel room. And you can imagine that this emptiness oppressed and almost scared me.

Nevertheless, it must have been these impressions, the deathliness of this room, that awakened my consciousness. I began to realise that until now our travelling and seeking did not and could not have any result, apart from the notion how things should not be done (which in itself is very valuable anyway). After all, what we seek is different, works differently from what we understand. It is not somewhere, it is everywhere, even here in W., in this hotel room.

There must be a large number of people who seek it, A., just as we do, but many may already have found it, while we are still wholly groping in the dark. We are not solitary individuals or exceptions amongst the rest of humanity. Humanity is a whole. This was what I was always aware of in these overcrowded train compartments.

It is good to seek and to travel, but in my view, finding is still something else. Perhaps it is contemplating in an empty room and being taken up into the silence. I would rather express it differently – I would express it as something that has in some way to do with others, because what we seek has absolute value. It should be able to liberate all these people from their pain. It should be able to free them from this age-long, hopeless travelling. If they want to, of course. An impossible task? The notion that we are with many, makes me feel very hopeful!

Letter of a traveller. Pentagram 1988, no. 3



DIALOGUE

So far, we have examined how man is called from the primordial ground of life to return: 'Come to me' – it is the meaningful word from the ancient creation myths that also applies to him.

This 'Return' of the *Omnia ab Uno, Omnia ad Unum* – everything originates from the one, everything returns to the one, is meant for him. It refers to the return to the true basis of his existence, the beginning that he received when he was born, and his pure soul was bound to a young, beautiful human body – an absolute miracle within itself. However, we also see that a human being soon becomes bogged down in the immense inertia of existence, the conditions and the worries that accompany life on earth. He is hardly able to sustain himself. From a certain age, the conditions of life demand all his time; yet, during this training school, he achieves consciousness and insight into his own situation. It shows him what he is able to do concerning his closest relatives; it also shows him how he fails towards his neighbours.

We saw how all of this drives a person to consciousness, to recognising the world around him and to recognising himself in that world. We have learned to understand why it was written above the famous temple of Apollo in Delphi (Greece): 'Man, know thyself'. These words stem from Egypt, and may be supplemented by the words 'for then you will know God'.

Jesus said: '...When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and you are the poverty.' *Gospel of Thomas*, 3

Wanting to become acquainted with yourself is, as a matter of fact, a rather egocentric activity. And a pitfall crops up. Self-knowledge is not the same as knowing how I function mentally and emotionally. Psychological questions like: 'how does this affect me?' and 'how do I feel about this?' lie close to the surface, but there are subconscious layers of the personality that would like to surface as well, claiming a part of the attention of the consciousness. In dealing with this, we might say that we do not so much examine the human being as we do the unfinished pillars and arches from the past that actually erected an unstable construction. This construction is nevertheless quite real; it is the consciousness that we call the 'I', sometimes engaging, sometimes scintillating, sometimes offended, sometimes jealous, and so on. It is not a poster child for the true human being, for a truly high-minded person, so to speak.

Somehow, we feel that the true human being is or should be of a quite different calibre, with quite different qualities. And only by interaction with other people and with 'the inner Other One' will we be able to become acquainted with him.



Man represented by the CTAG rhythm of the DNA code

LIVING THROUGH THE OTHER ONE With the Lithuanian philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) we can say that we only live through the other one. Once born into our family, we first become acquainted with the other people around us. Initially, this is the background against which everything stands out. The others are part of me to the extent that they gladden and simplify my life. From the very beginning, we are self-maintaining: we maintain ourselves by unceasingly using the things around us. The way in which a person safeguards his independence is appropriation. We ingest food and drink, but also cars and movies, books and houses as well as immaterial things. All these ‘other things’ are assimilated

into the same being; they help to form our I; we possess them. However, in the long run, this form of life, of appropriation, does not bring satisfaction, because it does not enable a person to become really acquainted with the Other One. This is why the most important human property that may raise him above self-maintenance remains fallow and this property is love. Great thinkers have said that there is no greater joy than becoming acquainted with the Other One. In the Vedas, the Indian philosophy teaches that there is actually no difference between the Other One and myself: *Tat tvam asi*: ‘That is you’ and compares the Other One with Brahman. And Jesus, too, taught in the same spirit: love your neighbour as yourself. A Persian poet

A human being is he who learns; a human being is he who gives and takes, and who can say: I need you!

spoke lyrically about ‘the fire that nourishes itself’, and ‘the one source that becomes fuller as you draw more from it’.

It is this longing for the Other One that stimulates our true loving nature. Being addressed by the Other One is the beginning of true liberation.

Initially, we use creation around us to be able to exist. Then creation opens a sensory organ for it in a human being: we will become interested in this great creation around us. We begin with astonishment, and from astonishment, we proceed to admiration, and from there to ‘stammering adoration’, as J. van Rijckenborgh expressed it. Then we truly see the other human being, perhaps even for the first time. And we realise: without other people, I would not be able to exist!

A human being is he who learns; a human being is he who gives and takes, and who can say: I need you! And he who begs: need me! A human being is he who is able to make himself insignificant, as Laozi advises him: ‘He is like the water that seeks the low places, merges and flows into the great ocean.’

Laozi, *Daodejing*, chapter 66

Only in living life with and for others can I mean something and can I discover myself. What happens if we encounter someone else? Usually we live with each other, semiconsciously, but often also passing as strangers in the night. Someone else approaches us, for instance, for just a short conversation. For a

moment everything changes – I do not see the face of this other one but much more: a world, a history of genesis as it stands before me here in time! I can see an original human being within him because this original human being is awakened within me, if only my eyes have been opened, illuminated by the Spirit!

SURPASSING SELF-MAINTENANCE The first and largest step to ultimate liberation is taken when we allow our love and our ability to care to extend in openness to the Other One. It is a new responsibility for me: only by serving the Other One and by wholly opening myself to this unique Other One, will I be able to become acquainted with myself. It is not that we ourselves are not important. On the contrary, does not Jesus, who is the Christ, say: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’? However, what matters is to learn to see it in the proper perspective. This is why an ancient Rosicrucian wisdom teaches: ‘Self-forgotten service is always the shortest and most joyful way to God.’ This is a great mystery and perhaps the great task for our time.

According to Levinas, the full meaning of being human is in surpassing self-maintenance. To live is to exist for others and my life becomes very meaningful if I am ‘there’, if I am present, helpful, learning, with a mind open to the well-being of everyone else living in my circle of existence.

This concerns a longing for the Other One, but without needing this Other One for personal

'Not-being is the mirror of absolute being, in which the radiation of reality is mirrored and its reflection is realised in a second.

Unity is manifested in multiformity.

Like when we count one, it becomes many.

All numbers begin with one, yet we will never be able to find the end.

As not-being is pure in itself,
the 'hidden treasure' is reflected in it.

Shabistari

ends, because I have surpassed the stage of self-maintenance. The kingdom of God is within us, the gospel says, but I only find it by serving the Other One. A soul human being, the truly inwardly matured human being, always keeps his eyes focused on what is higher, the Spirit, but he also keeps his heart open to his fellow men. The following words explain this even more clearly: 'If your leaders say to you: Look, the kingdom is in the sky, then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you: It is in the sea, then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is within you and it is outside you. When you know yourselves, then you will be known...' *Gospel of Thomas, 3*

Here the kingdom is directly linked with the process of self-knowledge. It is the true (spiritual) life. 'The Kingdom is a state of consciousness in the here and now,' Jacob Slavenburg states in his book *Inleiding tot het esoterisch Christendom* (Introduction to esoteric Christianity, 2003) and he says: Jesus' teachings are encouragements to his listeners to become conscious. This becoming conscious ultimately leads to consciousness. This concerns the consciousness of the total realisation of being human – but this can only occur in interaction with the Other One. And it can only occur on the level at which a true link is possible: the realm of the soul. This is the true dialogue.

SPINOZA A dialogue, interpreted as a conversation, assumes there are two individuals who in

turn say something during this conversation. It is an exchange of thoughts, and the people concerned are connected. The participants in the conversation exchange ideas and points of view; they follow each other's examples, attempting to achieve a wider view and to learn something from each other in this way. There is the possibility of learning from our environment, that is, from something outside us. Above, we saw that we, through contact with our fellow men, become acquainted with ourselves, but what about our power to know? What actually is knowing?

In his *Ethics*, Spinoza says: 'The mind without the thinking faculty of the Spirit is revealed to have its own method; it is fixed in its own being.' With our senses, we perceive within the dimension of time and space.

Because we arrive at a vision, a concept or a point of view regarding our observations through our thinking, feeling and willing, identify with it and then live this vision of life, this will lead to experiential consciousness. The surrounding nature holds up a mirror to us, in which we are able to test this vision of life that actually constitutes the basis of our existence. If this path of experience is too strongly blocked, so that we can no longer gain wisdom from life, our development stagnates. Spinoza says: We keep ourselves fixed in our own being. We see the world through our acquired consciousness and thus only experience ourselves. We do not see the sun, but the idea that we have of the sun; we see our own projections. We do



Bridge with a human being and cows in Georgia. © Archil Kikodze

not hear what our conversation partner says, but only our interpretation of it. This is why our perception and our dialogue are of a very limited nature, and we often only seem to have a conversation with ourselves.

Spinoza also speaks about knowledge according to which something can only be understood on the basis of its being, that is, through its essence. Our mental faculty is not a spiritual faculty. Not until our intellect is controlled by the thinking faculty of the Spirit, can we perceive the essence of things. Spinoza said about this: 'The Spirit has the power to bring all bodily impressions or all images of things back to the image of God.'

'All images are true to the extent that they are brought back to God. After all, any image that exists in God wholly corresponds to what He has proposed and therefore, all of them are also true.' 'He who has a true image, knows that he has a true image and is no longer able to doubt its truth.'

B. de Spinoza, *Ethics*, Propositions 14, 32, 43

LOVE Knowledge of the essence of things is neither a collection of interpretations nor a gathering of endless, partial information. It belongs to a state that is to be found beyond our time-spatial existence, with which we have (in principle) only one property in common: love. This knowledge of love unceasingly speaks to us from our microcosmic being, the true human being, which transcendently surrounds and pervades us.

The 'existence of the essence of things' speaks as an inner voice. As Hermes says to the seeking human being: 'As I said before, that which is created comes into being through some other creature. So there is nothing that existed before anything came into being, with the exception of the Creator, who never came into being. All creatures are visible, but He is invisible. For this very reason He creates: to make himself visible. Thus He creates continuously and in this way makes himself visible.

It is in this way that one should think and come to reverence, and deem oneself to be



Initiation is being silent and having true interaction with the Other One. It becomes silent in a human being; the Other One speaks!

blessed that one has come to know the Father.
Hermes Trismegistus, Fifteenth Book, verses 3-5

We are able to experience this thinking, revealed by the spirit of Hermes, when our ordinary thinking, our mental faculty, begins to see through itself as being 'poor in spirit'. If the Spirit is still unable to manifest itself in the soul, the soul does not truly live. This insight is the gate to the truth.

Love is the link. It is love that builds the great bridge between the human being who longs for liberation and the world of 'the kingdom', for in the true world, we become equal to what we see, to that for which our heart yearns.

In the Gospel of Philip, it is described as follows:

'It is not possible for anyone to see anything of the things that actually exist unless he becomes like them. This is not the way with man in the world: he sees the sun without being a sun; and he sees the heaven and the earth and all other things, but he is not these things.

This is quite in keeping with the truth. But you saw something of that place, and you became those things.

You saw the Spirit, you became spirit.

You saw Christ, you became Christ.

You saw the Father, you shall become Father.

So in this place you see everything and do not see yourself,

but in that place you do see yourself, and what you see you shall become.'

Gospel of Philip, logion 36

God wants to be known by us. To this end, he grants us the other one, both in our environment as well as the inner Other One. He grants us the power of not-being that is pure within itself. This not-being is like a mirror, in which God sees himself and we see ourselves in him. Initiation is being silent and having true interaction with the Other One. It becomes silent in a human being; the Other One speaks! If we let go of our limited logic, God, the logos, will glorify himself in the dialogue with his creature, man. This is what is meant by 'the fire that nourishes itself', and by 'the one source that becomes fuller as we draw more from it'. The human being will stand on another foundation of life, and what is known is no longer outside him who knows. ★

Souget vñ r'ichinē gods minne an ons. vñ gyt
 in egen geborn sijn in di woert. daz wir leben in
 de sijnē. vñ nach deme sijnē. vñ nicht durch den sijn
 ist volich vurecht. voo nu we em rich konic der da herte
 me schone dochter. gebe h' di eines armen māns sijnē. al di
 de zu deme geslechte herten di waden da von er vrower. vñ
 er holet vñ gewirdegt. sijn sprichit em mēst. Got ist mensche
 worden da von gehohit ist vñ gewirdegt allis mensche kīne
 des minge vñ vñs wol vrowen. daz xpc vñse brud ist gewer
 von eigen crāse vñ alle di core d'engels. vñ sit zu zud rechte
 hant des vades. durre mēst hat wol ge sprochen. al' vñche
 ich gebe u vil dar sijnē. was hulpe mich daz ich herte emē brud
 d' da r'iche we vñ vñe ich da bi em arin mā. was hulpe mich
 herte emē brud d' da we em wasser mā vñ we ich da bi em me.
 Ich sit em ands vñ em naks. Got ist n alleine mensche worden.
 sijnē h' hat nēst herte nē an sich genumē. vñ s'chint di mēstere
 ge mensche. daz alle mensche sijn. glich d'el and' nē. al' ich s'pē vñ
 che allis daz gyt. daz alle heilige be feren hat vñ mare gods und
 vñ xpc nach sijn mēcher. daz ist min ege ind nē. sijn mocht ir n' mich
 vñge. sit ich ind nē hanc allis daz xpc nach sijn menscheit ge leide
 mag. voo von ist dan daz. daz vñs xpm hōhe vñ vñdige all vñ
 leide hē vñ got. daz ist da von vñs h' ist ge vñdēt ein bode vñ
 gode zu vñs vñ hat vñs zu getragen zu vñs d'ikeit. di selikeit
 di h' vñs zu trut di vñs vñs d' d' vñs sijn ge hert. in deme
 merst grunde da hat em mēschē d'le nē. di nē ist ei vñ cūal
 die. hi mag wol erwas n' lügen vñ iche zu hange daz ist d'it ei n.
 Ich s'pē ei ands vñ em swar vñs nō m' d' blotheit d' nē ane mēl
 sal bestan d' mūz all psonen vñ ge gangen sijn. also daz h' d' mēl
 chen d' nē mēl. den he mēl ouge n' ge sach. daz h' den mēche
 als wol gods grūne al' deme d' bēme ist vñ sijn heimelech vñ
 ist. alle di vñle daz du d' m' psonē me gods gant vñ d' mēche
 den du n' ge sehet. so ist d' vñle mēche. noch du gelugers n'

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Page from an ad-
 dress of Master
 Eckhart. Georg-
 August University,
 Göttingen

in dialogue *within* yourself

Know the Light and become friends with it

Hermes, Poimandres

‘I have an interview!’
‘Did you apply for a job, then?’
‘Not literally, but I nevertheless have an interview.’
‘And what will this interview be about? Heavy, serious topics? Perhaps about God. Or will it be about light matters?’
‘Both, as it will be about human life, and for many people, this is heavy, but light for others.’
‘Why do you want to talk about it?’
‘I would like to explore if it is possible to make life lighter for many more people or, with a somewhat weighty word, to make ‘liberation’ possible, and to achieve liberation from ‘heaviness’.’
‘So, you apply for liberation?’
‘Yes’
‘For yourself? That would be quite egocentric, I think!’
‘Yes and no. Just imagine that you can only achieve liberation from ‘heaviness’ for others if you have first sufficiently liberated yourself. Just as a better environment begins with yourself. Isn’t this the only way then?’
‘Then I think it is arrogance: who are you to decide that you can liberate yourself and also that others are bent down by the heaviness of life and have to be liberated from it?’
‘To a certain extent, you are right: I am actually unable to liberate myself, but there does exist a masterly and seemingly strange, inner power that must accomplish this work. I do not yet know exactly how, but this is the very

reason I engage in this conversation.’
‘Okay, that may be the case, but what is your assumption based on?’
‘Which assumption?’
‘That an inner master, whom you cannot see, should do this work.’
‘On wisdom from the East and the West, on ‘universal’ knowledge like, for instance, the wisdom that is also known in the Christian tradition when it is said: ‘My yoke is easy and my burden is light.’ To me this means that this inner master makes the heaviness of this life light, even if it is called a way of the cross.’
‘Therefore, your thinking is based on faith in an authority, because you did not experience this yourself and moreover, you did not yet answer my question why all other people should necessarily be liberated. Who demands this? You?’
‘It is worthwhile to explore what you say in more detail and I would like to do so together, preferably after my ‘interview’. Shall we agree to do so?’
‘Yes, that certainly seems worthwhile, for, to be honest, this theme occupies my mind, too: I not only think it is interesting, but I also feel the need for people to learn to let go of what is heavy in life. I wish you a good ‘interview’.’
‘Thank you.’

SPEAKING AT CROSS-PURPOSES AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE A dialogue is meant for people whose concept of conversation partners is



threads of connection hither and thither, have ended by pro-
claiming the Kumāras "due chiefly to the fancy of the Purānic *writers*

Ma, — we are told by the author of *The Symbolic Figures of the Kódicos* "is Five; kara, a hand with its

five fingers, as also a five sided sign or a pentagon." The

Kumāra, (in this case an anagram for occult purposes) are
— because the last two names have *often been kept secret*;
five in esoterism, as Yogis they are the fifth order of Brah-

madevas, and the five fold Chohans, having the soul of the

five elements in them, Water and Ether predominating, and

therefore their symbols were both aquatic & fiery. "Wisdom *issues from* lies
concealed under the couch of him who rests on *the golden lotos* (*padma*) floating on
the water." In India it is Vishnu (one of whose avatars was Buddha, as some claim)
in days of old). The Prachetasas, the worshippers of Nārāyaṇa (who, like Poseidon
moved or dwelt over not under the waters) plunged into the depths of the Ocean for their
devotions, and remained therein 10,000 years; *but five, esoterically*. "Prache-
tas" is in Sanskrit the name of *the ministers* of Varuna, the water god, & the same
as Poseidon (Neptune). The Prachetasas being thus identical with the *five*
ministers of XWZZAP (Poseidon) of the Perator gnostics, *respectively*
AOT, AOA, OTΩ, OTΩAB, "the triple name (thus making seven) of
the fifth being lost" — i.e. kept secret. This much for the aquatic
the fiery symbol — spiritually, for

Fragment of the manuscript of *The Secret Doctrine* by H.P. Blavatsky, around 1880

based in equality and rationality. These are people who believe that the souls that we are and become, can meet each other on the mental level in an exchange of ideas that may lead to mutual understanding, and above all, to new and improved understanding of the peculiar situation in which we find ourselves as human beings. This understanding may also occur as a series of ever-loftier insights that communicate themselves to our consciousness in a sometimes lively interaction. We might ask: is it special that a dialogue 'develops' in which an exchange of ideas on the basis of equality and rationality unfolds?

Our answer is 'Yes, that is special, because this equality and rationality do not naturally play a role on the world stage.' Power, institutions, interests, profit, glory and the ensuing struggle — all these worldly conditions — ensure that an 'open dialogue' is rare. Often, the impulse to have an 'open dialogue' is derailed and soon ends in an argument, in a power struggle or a debate that must be won by one party. A Dutch comedian once defined having a discussion as speaking at cross-purposes as closely as possible. According to him (André van Duijn), this is the property of modern verbal communication. It is, therefore, very

Light – in the sense of enlightened, because it is pulled up to where it learns about itself and its origin

exceptional when people meet each other on the basis of equality in an exchange of ideas, for the purpose of expressing them in a dialogue. Its special nature can be found in humaneness and rationality, because why would a person even want to engage in an 'open' conversation, if he is striving for profit and the pursuit of his self-interest? Would this be for 'spiritual' profit or because he or she wants to grow spiritually?

We know that true humaneness is called a miracle in hermetic considerations, which have a central place in this issue of the Pentagon.

'Man is a great miracle,' we learn from the Egyptian Arch-Gnosis.

Our body is amazing, because it has the possibility of allowing the abovementioned insights.

ETERNITY IS A MYSTERY However, in the gnostic, hermetic context, the fact that man is a miracle particularly relates to an older concept of man – 'manas' in Sanskrit – 'thinker' – one who can also be characterised as 'son of god'. In Greek civilisation, we see a strong link between 'man' and autonomous thinking. Before we wrote about this in relation to Socrates and Plato.

In an 'open' dialogue, an exchange of ideas between rational people is particularly important. In this context, the word hermetic does not mean 'a closed system', but rather that we, human beings, have some notion of

an eternal, immortal element that is present in us, even if only dormant. And this element, that may or may not flare up during its shorter or longer ensoulment, nourishes rational thoughts.

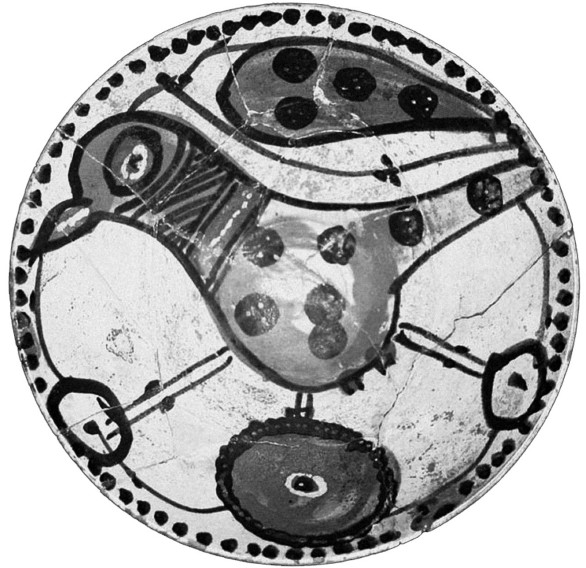
'I am a god in the depths of my thoughts,' is an often-quoted statement of a 19th-century Dutch author, Willem Kloos. And the early philosophers of the Enlightenment, Descartes and Spinoza, depart from a truly human existence exclusively based on the power of thinking, the mind, with the familiar 'I think, so I am.'

Are we able to transmit this notion or certain assumption of the eternal, immortal, inner element? Are we able to express the thoughts related to it in a conversation with others?

This is indeed the problem, because being conscious of it seems to be such an individual matter. Its expression involves a unique artistic skill, because language and word images are subjective and their meaning soon becomes antiquated, particularly in these times, sometimes just fading away.

This is why many spiritual pioneers in the world, like Laozi and the Buddha, were people of few words and much silence. After all, the sage does not speak needlessly. Similarly, the followers of gnostic philosophies and the Christian-hermetic gnosis are people of few words.

Tradition says that what is divine and eternal in a human being is secret. This statement is still valid.



Speaking about this mystery is an extremely delicate matter, because virtually every word expressed about it diminishes its power, certainly in the presence of those who, for instance, strive for worldly power, success, wealth and higher position.

The ancient Rosicrucians, therefore, knew the concept ‘sub rosa’ or keeping under the rose what should remain secret. They also knew the expression that no ‘roses should be cast before asses’.

THE VERTICAL DIALOGUE Even in 20th-century philosophy, many people recognise the statement: ‘About what we cannot speak, we should remain silent’ (Wittgenstein). Reti-
cense is a great virtue, from East to West, and from antiquity until our time. Reti-
cense does not desecrate a serene environment.

In light of this, and certainly also via Greek-Egyptian hermetic manuscripts, we find ‘spiritual’ dialogues whereby we Westerners have nevertheless found the opening for the exchange of ideas. Often this concerns ‘vertical’ dialogues, in other words, dialogues on the basis of an enlightened consciousness in a master-pupil relationship.

This is, therefore – and this is part of the mystery – a master-pupil relationship in one’s own inner being! Such a dialogue is purely spiritual; it is crystal-clear and honest. If you find yourself in such an inner conversation, desirous of a meaningful conclusion, it is important to formulate and finish sentences

properly. Below follows an example of such an inner exchange of ideas:

‘What is the state of my soul?’

‘A serious question.’

‘Now that I know that the soul exists, I am worried about its well-being.’

‘How do you determine what the state of your soul is?’

‘Perhaps by asking: does it feel heavy or light?’

‘What do you mean exactly?’

‘Heavy – in the sense of being pulled down by the unceasingly pursuit of human needs and desires.

Light – in the sense of enlightened, when it is pulled up to where it learns about itself and its origin.’

‘How can you establish this?’

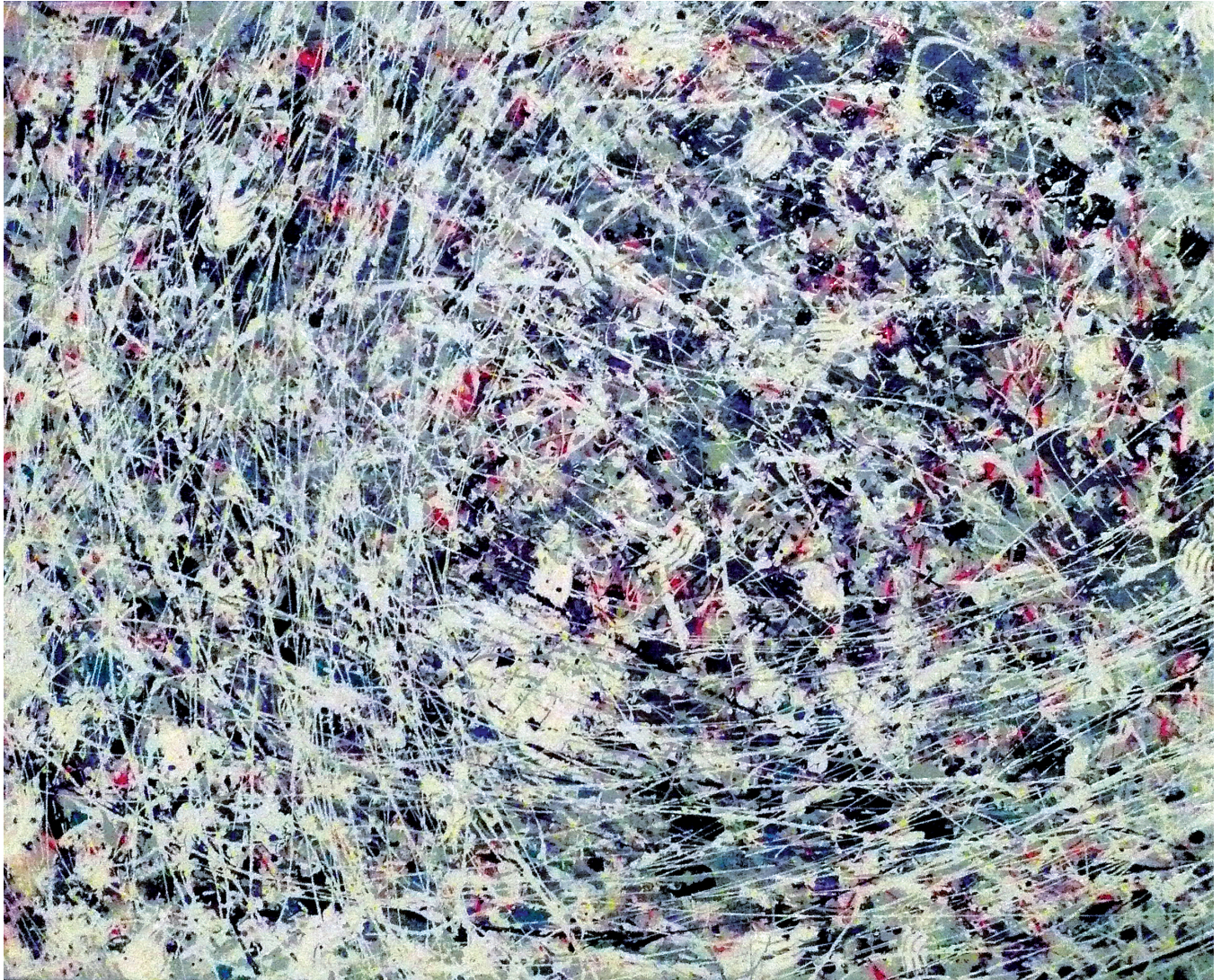
‘This is a difficult question. It depends on the extent to which I realise my responsibility for its well-being. I can distinguish two states of being: One in which I experience myself as a human being in which I live my daily life because it is usually fantastic to be alive. In addition, there is another way of experiencing this life.’

‘How should I interpret this?’

‘You should rather imagine this experiencing as ‘manifestation’.’

‘Is this state better than the other one?’

‘You are quite good at making someone stumble into the trap of ‘diversion’. No, what matters is the responsibility, as I said.’



No number. Abstract-expressionistic work by Jackson Pollock, around 1955

‘A good conscience, then, this feeling of satisfaction of being a good person...’

‘Well, good..., but at least knowing oneself to be a human being.’

‘Do you think that the soul is your conscience?’

‘No, it is not the conscience, but it may certainly use it as its voice. The conscience is a help for yourself, for instance, to take your responsibility seriously, to prevent you from forgetting and to protect you against its ensuing blind rage.’

‘As we are speaking, please, tell me why you have such tenderness for this – and excuse me for saying so – hardly tangible being which you assume exists?’

‘I do not assume it, but I know. There is something different, even higher than mental thinking: intuition, supermental intuition, direct, all-encompassing and eternal. This knowledge is not found through reasoning, but is the knowledge ‘of the heart’. In this way, knowing the divine raison d’être, or the soul, is possible.’

‘I think that I begin to understand you. It is the lustre that you have found and that even changes our conversation. The lustre of the soul surrounds you, because you have set out with it. You have become aware of what it tells you, if I understand it properly, through another power leading to knowledge. This so-called lustre of the soul consists of a light that allows you to share in a vibrating, luminous, total reality.’

‘Yes, and this is what I mean by responsibility. Through reasoning, we were able to find the way that the soul should go, and we have clearly understood that we should discard all its swaddling bands and loose ends. Now that we know this, we are able to distinguish between what binds the embodied soul – for that is what we actually are – and what liberates it, between what can and cannot be done. If we are not alert, we take what is evil for what is good and the other way round. In this way, confusion will always arise, or forgetfulness.’

Krishna said to Arjuna about the divine *raison d’être* (of the soul):

‘As the light of all lights, it sojourns beyond the darkness of our ignorance. It is knowledge, the only real thing that we can study or know, the inhabitant of the heart.’

THE SPIRITUAL INNER OTHER ONE And after we have achieved true knowledge – of ourselves, our inner being, our soul and the divine basis of existence – we will certainly be able to understand the origin of hermetic thinking. This beginning deals with the two figures in the human being. Hermes calls this: meditating on the essential things; then the circle is closed. In this way, the original figure is raised up once more in the microcosm. The human being who has offered the soul this possibility, will wholly and perfectly be taken up into this spiritual Other One! Thus the human being will, while living and working in

modern society, be able to release power and Light for all people which is what is urgently needed.

The power and the Light from the original, universal life can be experienced directly in our own lives and can be active in it once again, because the microcosm was, in a distant past, built from this life.

We know that light is vibration. We speak of the speed of light; faster than light is simply impossible. Light, in another context, is also accompanied by joy and happiness. Light gives the earth its beauty. Through light, this beauty becomes visible. If we switch on the light in a room, we see how beautifully furnished it is. If we walk through a wood, we sometimes see how the light shines through the branches on the leaves in countless rays. The light sparkles in the dew, scintillating and dancing in a thousandfold ways. Every step we take reveals a new palette, a new, immeasurably rich pattern of rays and light. And the original Light, the knowledge of the two worlds, is many times more vibrant. Down to our innermost depth, we are sure: I will never let go of this Light; and the Light will never let go of me, will never leave me. Down to my blood, it is linked with me.

It is because we know that there are two worlds, two natures, and because we have kept this knowledge alive, remaining in dialogue with it, we are able to say that the two friends have become one being in this vertical dialogue. Further, they will never have to disappear from the microcosm, but will, on the contrary, lead the way to the glorious developments of the new field of life.

He who is in dialogue in this way is linked with a wholly different knowledge, with a new kind of living knowledge. That is Gnosis ☸

Countless myths have been passed down to us from the most diverse cultural periods. They contain images of early humanity depicting the origin of the world, the activity of the forces of nature, gods and fate after death.

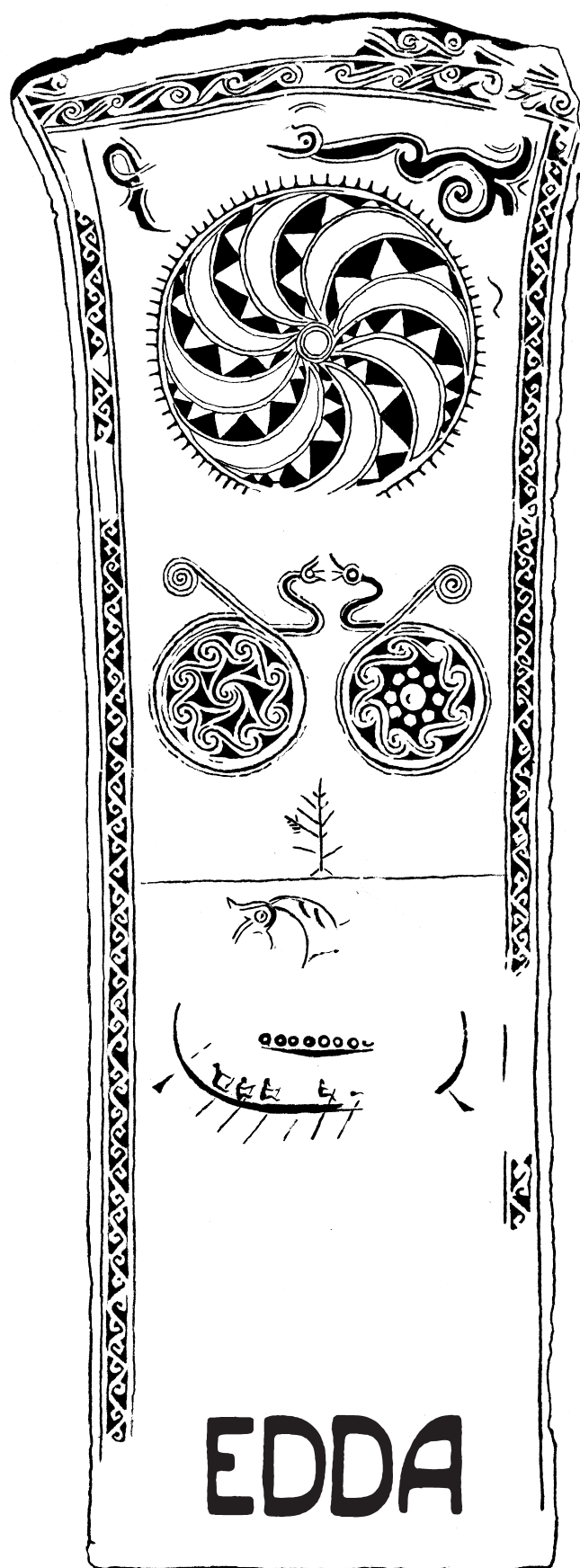
the fate of the gods

The myths collected in the Edda speak about the mysteries of the development of the world.

The Edda transmits the one universal truth by various images, in accordance with the power of imagination of the listeners at that time.

Part three of our series about the Edda deals with the fate of the gods.

What Volva passed down is myth, not history. From the darkness of the most distant past, Volva clairvoyantly beheld individual events and transmitted them in all their sharpness into the consciousness of the listening Thing community. The Thing assembly consisted of the eldest members of the families and the free men



bearing arms. They all descended from Heimdall. This figure 'who irradiates the world' corresponded to the light of the first creation. He was the Light of the world that directly stemmed from the primordial source of the Spirit and from the world of divine perfection. When he blew his horn, its sound was carried through all periods of the world – like a hidden sound. Hearing the 'sound' of the Light is, after all, a timeless task that concerns the recreation of the human being.

Volva spoke in the name of the god Odin, who was also called Allfather or Valfather (Father of the Slain). He was the creator of all souls, and it was his will that the development of the world – from the most distant past until its ruin – be proclaimed to people. The vision of the perfect human being can finally be shown to man as morning redness in the rising of the sun. Verse 1 from the vision of the prophetess reads:

'Hearing I ask from the holy races, from Heimdall's sons, both high and low. Thou wilt, Odin, that well I relate old tales I remember of men long ago.'

WHO IS ODIN? Of Odin, it is said that he had twelve names.

This means that a large number of creative aspects were contained in the energy emanating from him. Together with his wife Freya, he was the father of the main gods like Baldur, Thor, Heimdall and Tyr. They continued to work on the levels of nature and developed the

form and the properties of the physical human being. Odin was the son of Bur and of the giantess Bestla. Odin symbolised a spiritual being who was on his way through the different forms of nature. The universal teachings consider the name Odin a class of microcosms, of original, spiritual 'archetypes' of the true man, who, on his way through nature, attempted to evoke a reflection of himself in a physical human being, a being of the earth.

Odin possessed twelve creative powers, emanations of the central creative energy, stemming from what is invisible, or from the One. We see them symbolically represented in the twelve Aesir, the twelve gods, expressing the whole of creation. In the human being, they are reflected in the twelve pairs of cranial nerves, the delicate and very sensitive network, reaching every cell in the human body and enabling an intimate link between body, soul and spirit.

From Asgard (garden or world of one), creation with its three worlds came forth. The ace is a card in a deck of cards, originally representing the number 1, the trump card that overtrumps all other cards and as a unity takes possession of the whole. Later, we find the twelve primordial principles again in the twelve streams, springing from Hvergelmir, the source in Niflheim. We also see them in the twelve primordial principles of our astrological zodiac that is actually called thyrkreis = circle of the gods.

Odin is the primordial source and creator of all souls, the father of the courageous fighters,

Myths owe their origin to ancient spiritual experiences and experiences of the soul. They are clothed in mythical images, initially transmitted orally and later also in written form. The images pass on a truth that is never rational or historic, but that can be understood intuitively on a spiritual level or on the level of the soul. Our current, dominant, rational thinking is inclined to doubt such impressions. Sober logic has problems with a truth that is clothed in images. This offers nothing familiar; all things seem to hide a mystery, and to pass on a message. He who finds the key is able to solve the mystery. Because all of us bear such a key in our heart, all of us are in principle also able to receive the secret message consciously.

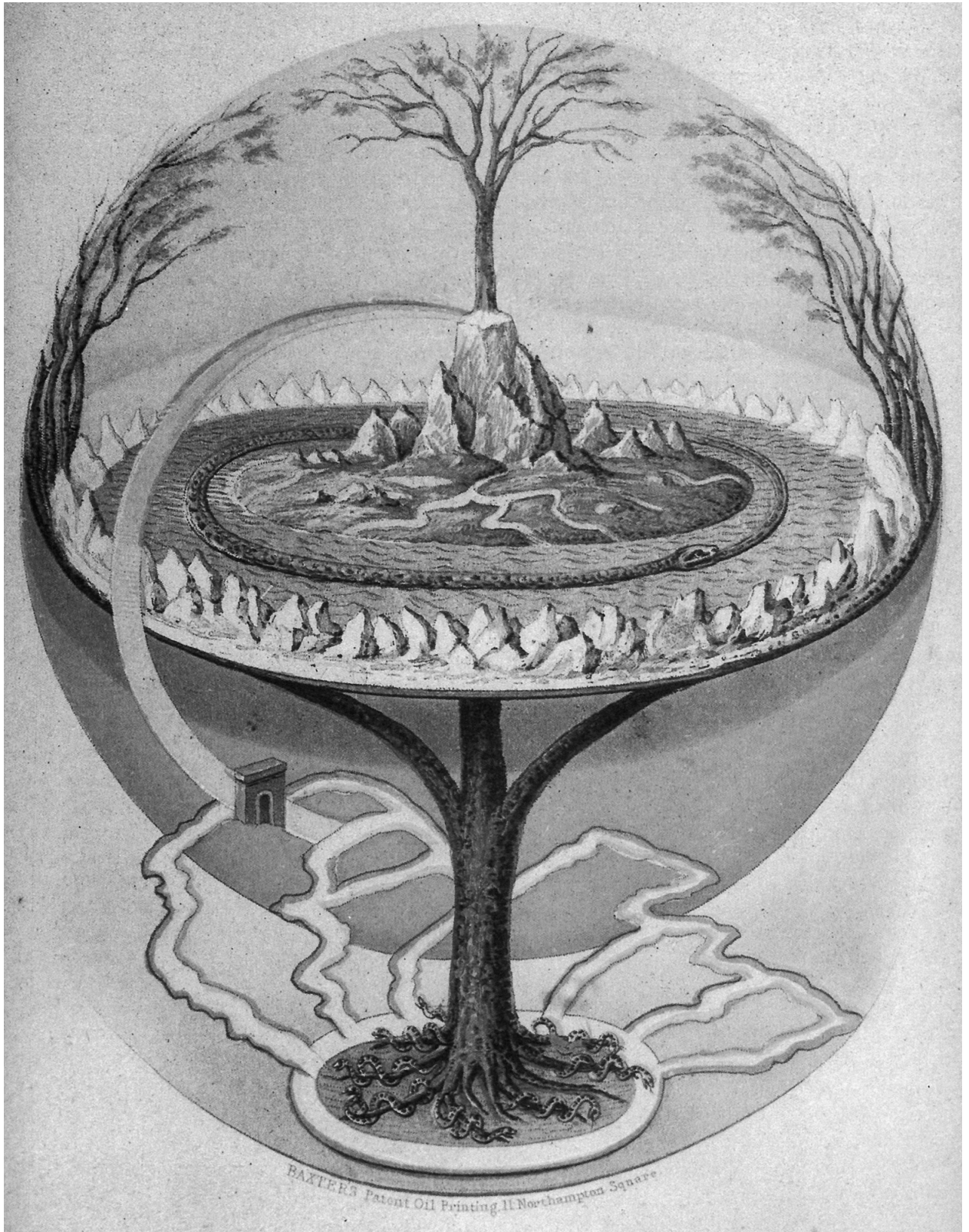
who did not die in their beds, but lost their lives on the battlefield of earthly existence. Here, too, we see a reference to the struggle, in which the hero defeats the forces that bind us to a lower level. Odin brings their souls to Valhalla, the hall of those fallen honourably in battle. They 'died' in the processes of the transformation of the soul and discarded their old being.

THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN SPEECH The name Odin also contains odem-adem, adam, the breathed-in soul. In Old High German, Odin is also called Wuodan or Wotan. He is the one who strongly propels and rules in the storm wind, the one who fills the lungs with his breath. He is the wind that rushes through the forest and makes the natural phenomena speak. The Edda teaches us that, as 'hangagod', Odin hung in the tree of life for nine nights (stages of development), listening to all impressions and sounds of nature. On the basis of these impressions, he formed the human language that abounds with images. Do not all languages hide mysteries, in which spirit and nature are linked? The Spirit becomes acquainted with itself through nature, and throughout enormous periods of time, nature changes and becomes spiritualised. Time does not play any role! Mimir, the memory of nature, assimilates all of this. In all languages, Odin's breath is present. The fact that Odin 'hung in the tree for nine nights' gives an impression of a kind of descent, or fall, of the spiritual aspect into mat-

ter. In order to enable man to liberate himself from nature one day, at the time appointed for him, a voluntary crucifixion of a much higher spiritual being is necessary that will exemplify the spiritualization, the transfiguration, to him. We should be well aware that the Germanic mysteries had only a vague idea of the essence and mission of the Christ.

Through the words of the prophetess, the listeners experienced the fate of the gods inwardly. Aspects of a primordial memory were revived in them. They 'experienced' Odin as a vitalising and enlightening energy, as a link with a higher aspect of the Spirit.

To the Germans, omnipresent Odin decided fate, but was also subjected to this fate himself. He was the personification of the power, working everywhere, that represented the divine will, wisdom and activity in every human being. Simultaneously, the prophetess showed them how Odin could die in a human being. In our modern usage, we would say that he would fade away into the subconscious. However, this process coincided with individualisation. To the extent that the human ego developed, he began to perceive himself and no longer the inner activity of the gods. He no longer considered himself a reflection of a spiritual entity, but an independent being. This is why the prophetess saw dark harbingers of a future that was pregnant with catastrophe and that made her surmise a threatening fate that would be inevitable ♀



18th-century representation of the world tree, Yggdrasil. J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols*, London, 1978

a good conversation

Precisely because it is a time in which communication is the magic word, a good conversation is less than ever natural. To a large extent, a true conversation seems to become less important now that communication from person to person increasingly occurs through email, sms messages or on facebook. The mass media dominate our lives and flood us with an excess supply of information. The content of conversations mainly consists of what we heard through these channels, and ever less of what we have to tell each other personally. In the end, it is more important to be knowledgeable and informed. He who is not, can no longer participate in conversations, so to speak, and therefore rather is silent.

Also the quality of our personal conversations says a lot about our conversational confusion that keeps our 'global community' in its grasp. Every individual must have a clear opinion about everything, preferably substantiated by quite a number of arguments and defended with the necessary decisiveness. After student riots had broken out at Columbia University in New York City, the philosopher Jacob Needleman, author of *Lost Christianity* and a teacher at this institution, was interviewed on the stairs of the university by a number of journalists asking for his opinion. 'I don't know,' Needleman answered very quietly. When they were not satisfied by this seemingly evasive answer, he repeated his words, because they were true: he did not know what to think of it. When, after some pressure, he still didn't choose sides, the astonished reporters gasped: 'This means that you do not have an opinion?' Needleman had the sensation that this was worse than committing a serious crime. Obviously, this conversation never made it into the media, because it is really unusual not to talk extensively to journalists.

Our world of information threatens to become so polarised that people are almost forced to agree with this person and to disagree with someone else. In this way, we slide back to extreme convictions for the sake of clarity. Doubt and hesitation are detrimental to public opinion. A strong point of view is demanded about the most diverse subjects. We have to be able to justify or substantiate our own opinion with

striking examples. It is logical that a conversation then often degenerates into a discussion, a debate, or rather a controversy, and that people lose themselves in verbal one-upmanship

In this way, we are no longer far from replacing the truth by being right. There was an old discussion technique in pre-Christian Greece, used by the sophists, who even exploited it for money. The first prize of this sparring match was the recognition of being right, usually confirmed because the winner had the last word.

Therefore, to whom should we better turn in our attempt to describe what we mean by a good conversation, than to the Greek philosopher Socrates, father of the Socratic dialogue, which earned him the hostility of the sophists? Socrates was not a master of superficial conversation about the weather or persuasion to his personal conviction, but what he did was to take away all certainties of his conversation partner.

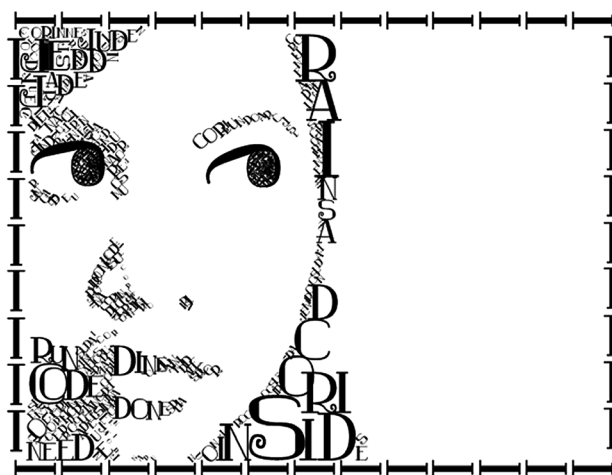
By continuously asking new and ever-deeper probing questions, he tried to bring his partner into a state of utter not-knowing. In this way, all self-assured babble was ended. In this context, Socrates exemplified this himself, because he neither knew nor made a pretence of knowing, thus to a certain extent always seeming to be wiser than the others. Karen Armstrong was justified in referring to the Socratic discussion technique in her latest bestseller *The Case for God*. According to her, this technique taught her that a dispute about the great ques-



DIALOGUE

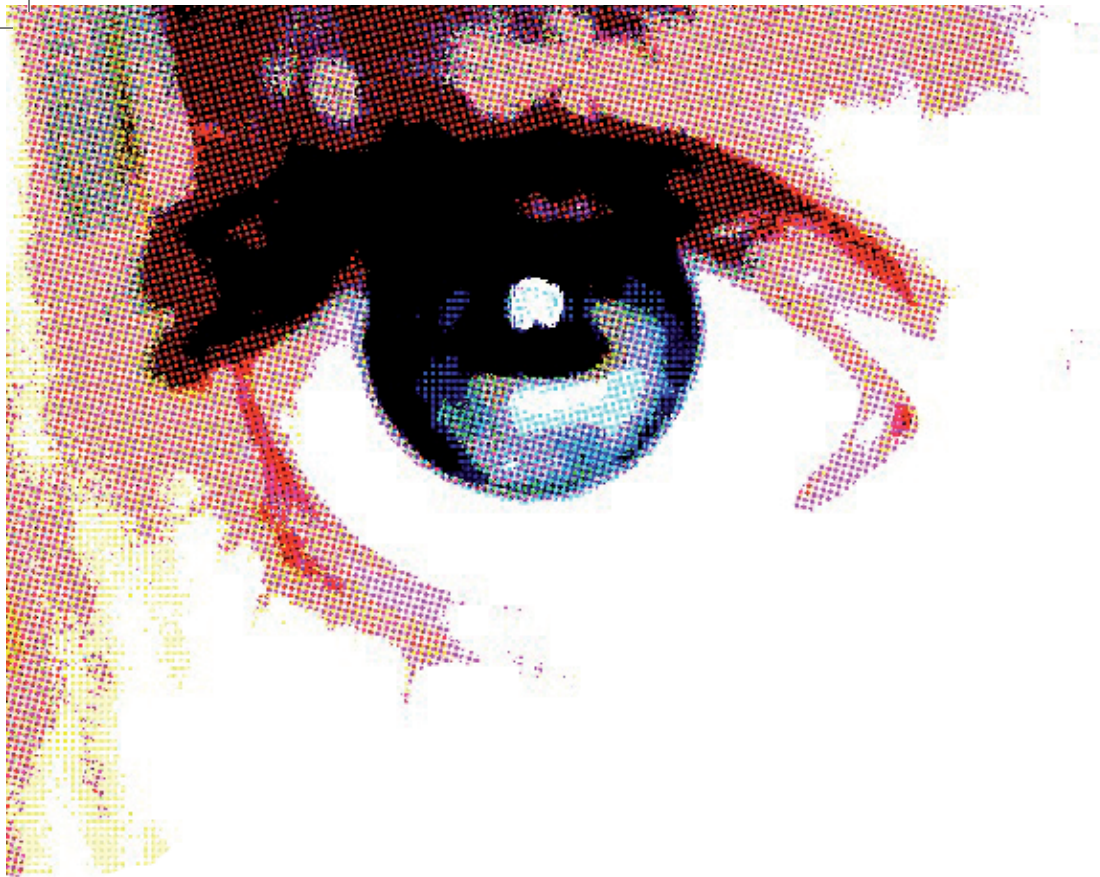
tions of life is counterproductive, that it makes any authentic spiritual experience impossible and will never lead to illumination.

The intention of a good dialogue is in testing one's own ideas against someone else's, while indicating, right from the start, not to have a claim on truth. This may not succeed immediately, and certainly not if we strive for it too consciously, but it is important that we simply admit this honestly and indeed this may form a new basis for the dialogue. The condition for such a conversation is the open, receptive attitude, with which we can listen to each other, open to the differences with and being different from one another. This conversation pulls us away from our established certainties, and liberates us from our secure castle of self-conceit. A good conversation always puts things into perspective, because it stops when either of the participants in the conversation takes refuge in general statements and absolute truths in which there is no room for discussion. In a good conversation, there is not only openness to the other one, but it may also open us to the mystery of the inaudible third one, who fills the silence between the conversation partners. It is the wholly Other One, who enters the space between the spoken words or between the lines of a written text. It is he who always surpasses everything and can never be identified with the objectively demonstrable and described truth; it is what remains after everything has been said. This is why this can only be manifested in



us by silence, not only verbally, but above all by silence of the heart, particularly when the conversation has arrived at a point where words fail. This does not concern the silence of stubbornly shutting oneself off, no longer wanting to listen, but it is quietly waiting for the redeeming word that allows what is unspeakable and indescribable to arise in the inner being. This silence, or this state of being silent, may also descend into us, when the endless stream of objections that we raise for ourselves along with the inner dialogue in our consciousness have stopped. The author James Joyce once called this the *stream of consciousness*.

We certainly do not always conduct this dispute outside ourselves. It usually continues with an imaginary, inner conversation partner, as an opponent whom we would like to convince of our being right. How often do we not exert ourselves endlessly thinking up arguments that



we will use when we become involved once more in a discussion with him or her, or things that we had wanted to say when we, once again, were tongue-tied?

Weren't they sentences formed by words of criticism, and expressed in a pedantic way? In the history of religion, countless examples can be found of people who also had such a dialogue with their God. With varying success, they engaged in a struggle with the product of their own imagination. This sometimes demonic creation was often too strong for them, forcing them into silent obedience and pious submission in an authoritarian way, ultimately abandoning them in total unbelief and denial of God.

By the way, in this context, such a denial may have a purifying effect. A shock of ignorance may raise us above ourselves and guide us to an inner surrender to the inexpressible mystery of life, as we can read in the Book of Job. This inner silence constitutes fertile ground for the silencing of our natural drive to self-manifestation, so that we may open ourselves to the creative divine word.

What then remains in us is only a great question, a yearning for the one true word, for

'Speak and I will become whole.' This is no longer an informative or descriptive speaking, but rather a transforming power stream, a word that fundamentally changes us. If the inner dispute has been silenced, the one divine word can resound in us, and wholly renew us by its formula.

The gnostic, Christian tradition speaks of the creative Logos, the word that in the beginning was with God and was God, as the one truth that could not be spoken, but the activity of which could only be experienced. It is also a word that speaks through our actions, through our mode of life, a statement that puts an end to other beautiful, yet empty words. Then 'it' speaks in and through us, while we ourselves hear and experience it silently.

What more can we say, when the divine speech of the inner Other One speaks? When this word resounds amongst people in dialogue, their speaking no longer aims to convince and persuade each other without objections, but rather it invites people to go beyond words and discover the transcendent truth that surpasses all words. Then communication is no longer an exchange of differences, but it is unification in the true sense of the word ✧



BOOK REVIEW: ITALIAN DIALOGUES

the depth of the word with **giordano bruno**

Giordano Bruno counts as one of the most famous figures from the late 1600's, but also as one of the figures who is hardest to interpret. His colourful life, his comprehensive, though not simple work in two languages, his polemic actions and the horrible end of his life, all contribute to this. The interpretation that Bruno would be a charlatan, a would-be magician, still obscures the critical image of the author.

Filippo Bruno was born in the southern Italian town of Nola near Naples in 1548. He never kept silent about his origin in the least. Family members figure in his works and give them a dramatic liveliness and a very personal ring. [...] At the age of fifteen, Filippo entered the monastery of the Dominicans in Naples, and adopted the monastic name Giordano. Soon, he rebelled against monastic life and was accused of having a bad influence on his fellow brothers.

Due to the threat of a process on a charge of heresy, he fled to Rome and later to Northern Italy. Finally, he took refuge in less catholic places: in Geneva, he joined the Calvinists and, after a short while, came into conflict with their leaders according to a recipe that would often be repeated in London and elsewhere: attacking a leading theologian, whom

he wholly floored in discussions or writings, and a forced flight and/or apology.

A Venetian patrician, Giovanni Mocenigo, invited him to come to Venice but, after a few months, reported him to the inquisition which subjected him to a lengthy process, first in Venice and next in Rome. After initially having shown remorse, Bruno refused to revoke his ideas and was burnt at the stake, a common punishment for heretics.

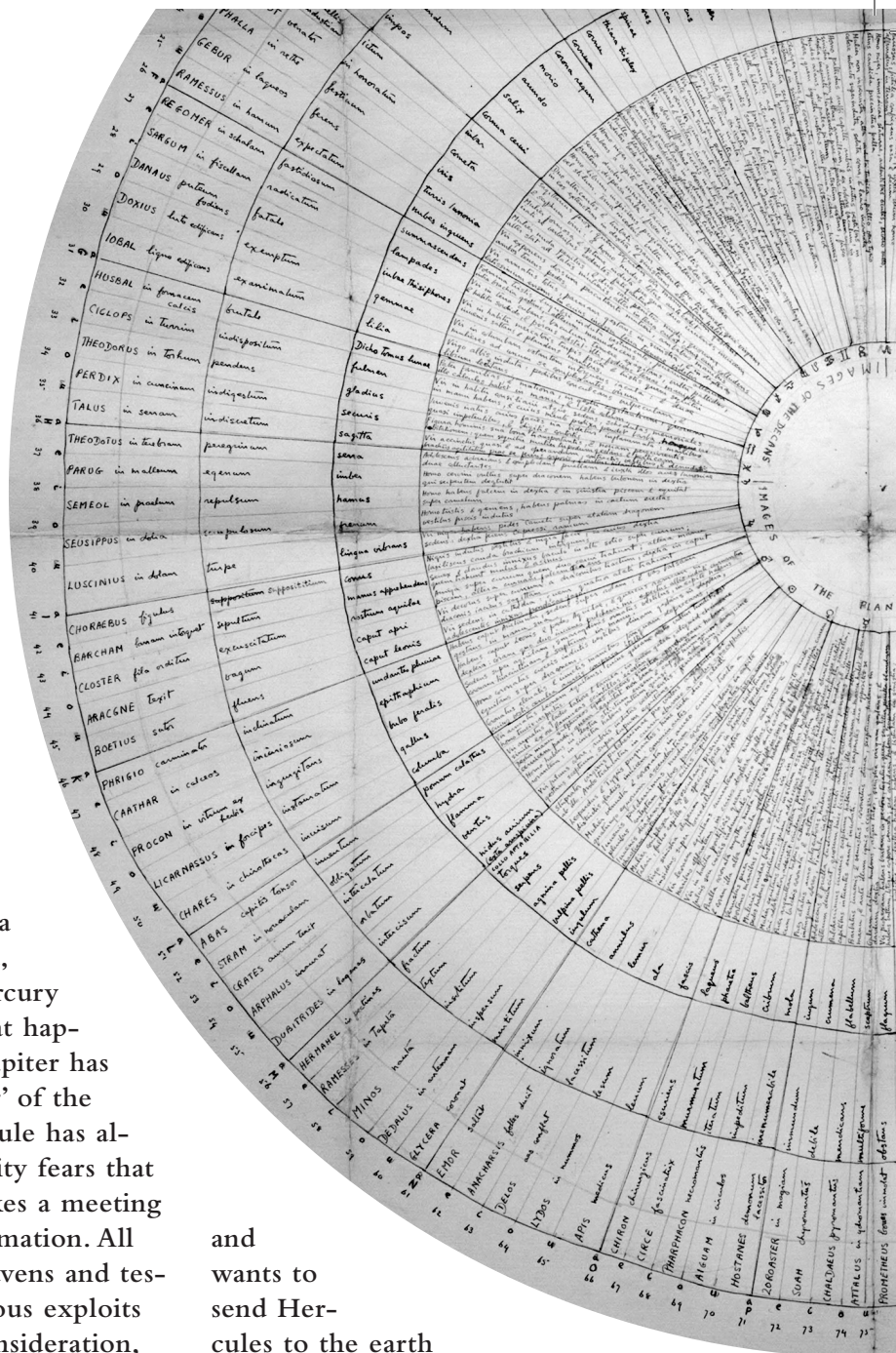
Bruno's works were partly written in Latin and partly in Italian, and although Latin was the common language at the university, Italian had an important function as the cultural language at the French and English courts. His dialogues often have more layers and meanings on different levels. As an example, let us look at a dialogue from his *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante* (Removal of the triumphant beast).

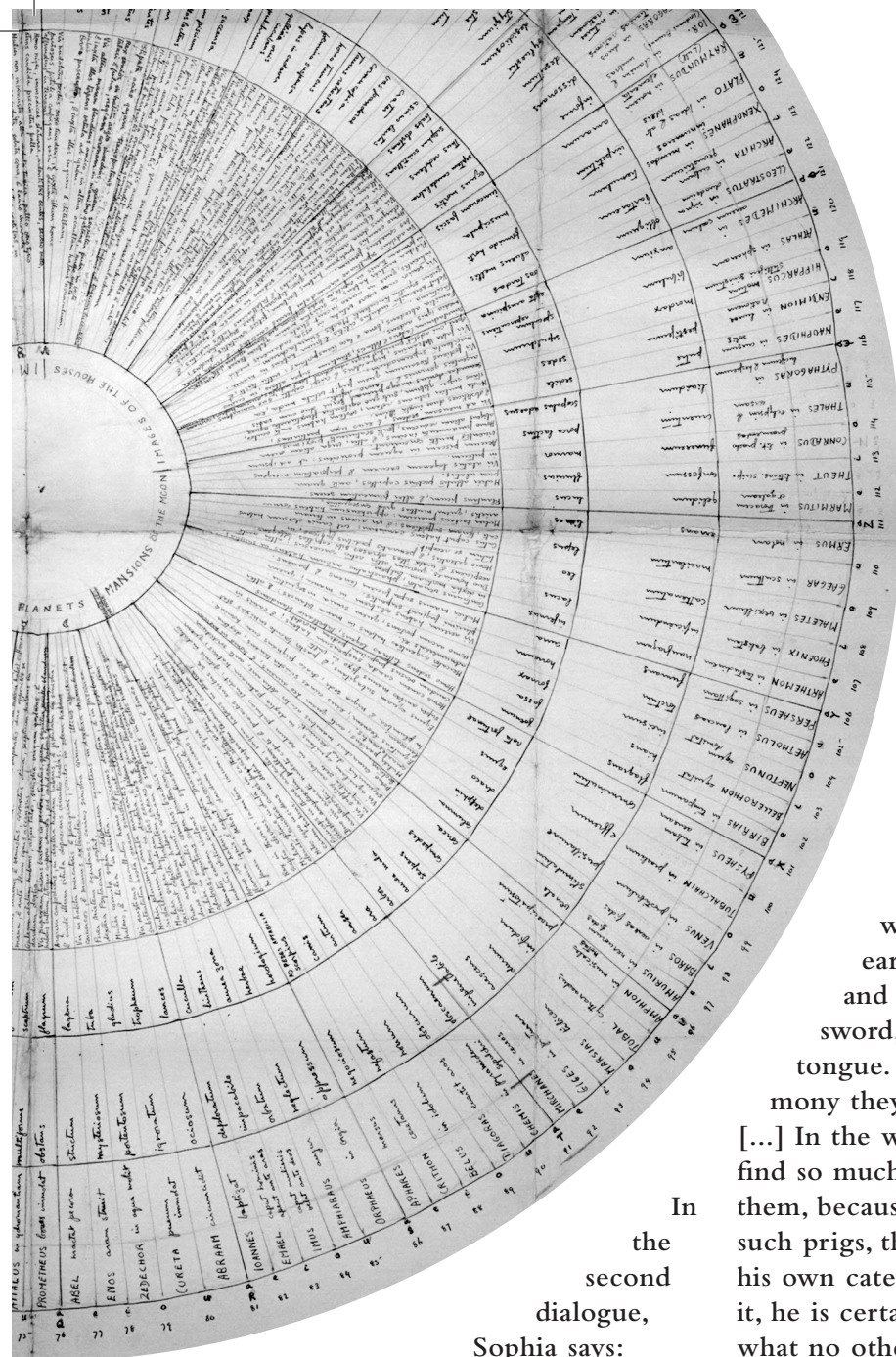
**The 'memory wheel' of
Giordano Bruno, from
De Umbris Idearum
(The shadow of the Ideas),
as reconstructed by Frances
Yates in 1952.s.**

Fragment, © Warburg Institute,

In it, three dialogues play a role on two levels. Two persons have a conversation, Saulino and Sophia, philosophy; and a few times, Mercury appears. Sophia tells Saulino what happens in the world of the gods: Jupiter has changed, because the 'world year' of the thirty-six thousand years of his rule has almost ended, and the supreme deity fears that he will be dethroned. He convokes a meeting of the gods and proposes a reformation. All constellations populating the heavens and testifying to the old, usually lascivious exploits of the gods will, after critical consideration, be removed from the heavens to be replaced by the virtues that should point the way to ethical and religious renewal and chase away the complementary and secondary vices. The immediate cause for the dialogue was the approaching turn of the century (from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century), and this fact was directly related to a Reformation. The rather lengthy, allegorical dialogue was enlivened by fierce, satiric sneers to dissidents, particularly theologians and philosophers. While Jupiter rages against the beast 'that is worse than the hydra of Lerna' and 'spreads fatal poison with multifarious heresy' (Luther)

and wants to send Hercules to the earth to fight it, Momus who, like a kind of heavenly critic – and Bruno's alter ego – expresses the radical solutions: It would be enough to put an end to this sect of worthless prigs who, without doing any good according to divine and natural laws, consider themselves pleasing to the gods, would like to be considered as such, and who say that doing good is good and doing evil is evil. However, we do not become worthy or pleasing to the gods by the good we do or the evil that we do not do, but by hoping and praying according to their catechism.





In
the
second
dialogue,
Sophia says:

Jupiter has ordered to judge and examine whether it is true that they [the grammarians] incite the nations to contempt or at least indifference with regard to legislators and laws by making them understand that they demand impossible things and rule for fun. [...] And whether they, although claiming to welcome reforms of laws and religions, come to spoil everything good it implies. [...] And finally, whether they, although greeting with the word of peace, bring the knife of discord everywhere they enter, taking away the son from his father, the neighbour from his neighbour, the citi-

zen from his fatherland, and introduce other terrible divisions that go against nature and all laws. And whether they, calling themselves servants of him who raises the dead and heals the sick, are the ones who, worse than all whom the earth nourishes, cripple the healthy and kill the living, not by fire or the sword, but rather by their pernicious tongue. And what kind of peace and harmony they hold out to the pitiable nations.

[...] In the whole rest of the world, we do not find so much discord and dissonance as with them, because among every ten thousand of such prigs, there is not one who did not write his own catechism; if he did not yet publish it, he is certainly on the brink of publishing what no other institution than his own approves, because he finds fault with, criticises and doubts everyone else.

However, the church of Rome, too, had to take the rap: the inquisition of Naples was defined by Mercury as 'the great avarice that works under the pretence of wanting to maintain religion'. Bruno did not try to advocate – and this constitutes the great difference with Rousseau's later, eighteenth-century 'revolutionary theories' – a return to the Golden Age. On the contrary, in the beginning of the third dialogue, he stated that being sinless, such as during the lost Golden Age, does not



Image on the monument for Bruno. The monument bears the inscription: 'To Bruno, in the century that he envisaged, who was burnt alive here. Rome, Campo di Fiore, 1889

mean that we are good or that we have virtue. The gods gave human beings hands to act, and to distinguish themselves from animals.

Bruno continued his treatise with the ancient Egyptians and their wisdom, contained in the notion that God is in nature, and even that 'nature (as you should know) is nothing else than God in matter'.

By their worship of nature, the ancient Egyptians worshipped the deity; and 'as the deity in a certain sense descends to the extent that he manifests himself in nature, similarly [man] ascends to the deity through nature and climbs up, by a life that radiates through the things of nature, to the life that lies above it.' It is the image of the stairs, by which a human being approaches God by 'natural magic'.

This is quite different from modern people, who 'worship gods which have hardly more spirit than our animals, because their worship ultimately ends with mortal people, worthless, shameful, foolish, fanatic, dishonourable, unfortunate people, ensouled by evil spirits, brainless, without eloquence and without virtue, who did not amount to anything during their lives, and therefore cannot possibly do anything for themselves or for others after death.' This was an unvarnished attack against counterreformation's worship of saints. It is clear that Bruno saw the approaching end of the world year as the end of the whole Christian-Mosaic tradition. This end is supposed to bring about renewal by a return to the virtues of antiquity, particularly to those of the Romans, who were highly praised by Bruno:

[...] magnanimity, justice and grace are pleasing to the gods, who for this reason raised the Roman people above all others, because they succeeded more than other nations to become equal to them [the gods] by their deeds. [...] And as their laws and religion were, so were their morals and deeds, and was so much honour and happiness bestowed on them.

This stimulus to a new ethical revival was actually Bruno's most 'utopian' aspect. Interest in utopian constructions like More's ideal city, or rumours about experiments in this context, left him indifferent.

Bruno used the last part of the third dialogue as a veiled attack on sham Christianity. Momus says about Orion: 'Let us send him to the people, because he can work miracles and, as Neptune knows, is able to walk on the water of the sea without sinking down, without getting wet feet, and to do many more nice tricks. And let him tell them whatever he wants by deceiving them that white is black, that the human mind is blind, although it believes to see what is best, and that what is excellent and good according to reason, is actually inferior, bad and degenerated.'

Just as all of Bruno's dialogues, *Spaccio* should be considered a polemic writing that constitutes a random indication in the author's development. Therefore, we should not be amazed that, at a later stage, Bruno appeared in centres of Lutheranism like Wittenberg and Helmstedt, and that he praised the German

reformation in his *Oratio Valedictoria* (1588), his farewell lecture at Wittenberg university. The monster of heresy from Spaccio that Hercules should come to fight had now become Hercules himself, who triumphed over the tiara-crowned Cerberus. However, this contradiction or change of course does not suggest that Bruno had quickly revoked all the ideas mentioned in the dialogue. His ideas always formed a consistent system.

We will now briefly discuss a few other essential points in Bruno's works. *About the exaltations of love* deals with the love of man for the deity. This latter love is, wholly in the Platonic tradition of the heavenly and the earthly Eros, diametrically opposed to vulgar love. Because the unity with the deity cannot be (wholly) accomplished during human life, heroic love has a tragic nature, and means continuous torture for the philosopher. However, the deity guides him upward by the stairs of cognitive processes. This work is considered a key text, in which we can already see a foreshadowing of Bruno's fate and ultimate steadfastness before the inquisition. Very important is Bruno's idea about the cosmos. In *The Meal on Ash Wednesday* (1584), he defended Copernicus as:

'... someone who far surpasses Ptolemy, Hipparchus, Eudoxus and all the others, who followed in their footsteps. He achieved this superiority by liberating himself from a number of false axioms of ordinary and vulgar philosophy, or rather from blindness.

The scope of Bruno's influence is hard to establish, even if it seems unlikely that Spinoza did not know his works

However, he did not distance himself far from it, because he, as a mathematician rather than a scientist, was unable to dig so deeply that he was able to pull out all the roots of false and vain principles, thus wholly solving all problems, liberating himself and others from so much useless research and focusing his considerations firmly on established and certain matters. Nevertheless, the greatness of this German, who bothered little about the foolish crowd and moved steadfastly against the flow of the opposite conviction [he used the word 'fede', that is also 'faith'], cannot be praised enough.'

This defence of Copernicus, elaborated in more detail in the dialogue *De l'infinito, universo e mondi*, is dated thirteen years before Galileo was to state the same in a text not meant for publication, and a half century before the publication of Galileo's *Dialogue about the two World Systems* (1632). However, at the same time, Bruno went much further than Copernicus did. He considered the universe, similar to the Roman nature philosopher Lucretius centuries before him, to be infinitely large, and postulated the existence of many worlds like ours. Within the universe that has no centre and no absolute direction of move-

ment, everything moves, both the 'suns; as well as the 'earths'. Heaviness and lightness are relative concepts.

In all these notions, Bruno proved himself to be pioneer of modern science. The scope of Bruno's influence is hard to establish. It is unclear to what extent a thinker like Spinoza knew Bruno, even if it seems unlikely that the Dutch philosopher did not read his works ★

For literature, please contact the editors



'If you now put aside all contention of words, you will find, my son, that the Spirit, the Soul of God, truly has dominion over everything: over fate, over the law, and over everything else, and that nothing is impossible for it.'

Hermes could not have put it more positively. This passage implies and means that, though physical man may have transgressed and sinned most grievously against the elementary laws of life, provided he surrenders and entrusts himself to the immortal soul, this immortal soul will be able to break through even the most fatal, self-invoked doom: this is the only forgiveness of sin. This is why we never raise any objection to any pupil, regardless of what misdeeds he or she may have done in the past; provided those concerned entrust themselves truly positively to the soul, and demonstrate it by their mode of life. Pupilship must be shown concretely and carried out demonstrably.

The doctrine of guilt and the forgiveness of sins and mercy is a classical, Hermetic teaching. It fills us with joy to be allowed to tell you this and to be able to prove it with the Gospel of the Hermes' Arch-Gnosis, which is many thousands of years old. This great and glorious consolation comes to us with the assurance that the true soul is higher and more powerful than any fate.

J. van Rijckenborgh